

寺町朱穂

TERAMACHI AKEHO

CHRONICLE OF BARSAC

# バールサク戦記

片翼のリクと白銀のルーク

## 魔王軍の姉 救世主の弟 VS

退魔の一族に転生した紅と白銀、それぞれの魔道。

ラブリック・ネリス

# Katahane no Riku - Chapter 1

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# THE DAY THE GEARS HAVE BROKEN UP

“Riku, my beloved daughter. Just get drown and become food for demons already.”

The father was carrying Riku by the collar.\*1

Without being able to touch the ground, her legs were waving around to no use. The father was calmly walking, getting closer to the edge of the cliff. It wasn't just a simple cliff; but a very steep one due to the constant shaving off of the raging sea.\*2 The stormy waves that were blasting onto the cliff looked like they were saying: “Come quickly. Fall at once.” It was a very scary scene.

Riku looked at her father.

“Father?”

The father was giving a smile that made him look as if he was troubled.

Even though he was going overboard now, he used to be very kind to Riku. Of course, he didn't neglect the spiritualist training. No matter how good she became at handling the spear, no matter how much she improved in swordplay, if she wasn't able to use the technique to infuse the demon banning power, she would get beaten. She would be whipped, beaten down with the demon banning sword. It hurt so much she couldn't bear. She hated it very much when she was ridiculed.

“This way I will end up falling down!”

Even so, normally he was very kind.

Riku knew that he didn't put food she didn't like on the table when eating out of consideration to her. Even when she had broken up vases, her father only smiled and

forgave her. When she wanted something, he would buy her. He would also give her cute dresses as present. When Riku had five years old, which at the time her mother had died from illness, her father comforted her. He became more affective and even decreased the training time.

Yes, Riku's father was very kind to her... Or at least, that was what it was supposed to be. Because there is no way a father like that would act this way. Riku soon became desperate and kept looking at her father.

"But Riku is an useless child, you know. That's why you will be falling down."

Cutting all of her hope in half, her father said.

She had already noticed it. Even though a smile was showing at her father's face, his eyes weren't smiling. It was similar to how he was during training. They were ones that showed profound frigidness.

"Even though Riku is already seven years old, she can't use spiritualist arts at all. This is simply not having any talent. A child without talent only puts shame to the Barusak household. That is why Riku is unneeded."

"But..."

Color vanished from Riku's sight.

It was said to her that she was unneeded. It was said to her that she had no talent. But then, what was she supposed to do from now on? Being driven out from her house, how is she supposed to keep living on? As if trying to hug, Riku started clinging on her father's arm.

"Fa-father! I, I will make more effort! So, please let me stay! Please, don't throw me away!"

"Riku."

Riku's father started to caress Riku's head with his free hand.

As if cherishing it, he stroked her hair. It was a red color that was as if it was burning. Riku didn't like it very much when her father stroked her hair. It wasn't that she didn't like her hair because of the red color. Rather, it was that she just couldn't get used to the way he did it. It felt to her like he was just looking at a research subject; it felt very scary.

But now, she couldn't displease her father in any way. That's why she desperately endured the discomfort.

"That's just an already determined fact. The four year old Rook long ago was already able to infuse demon banning power. The one that can't do the basic of the basics is only you, Riku. And I've always felt revolted at your hair anyway. It's nauseating."

Her father shook off the thin arms that were clinging at his arm.

Normally speaking, this shouldn't be enough to make her lose her grasp. But Riku was deeply shaken by her father. Even with her unimaginable strength, there was no way for her to keep up on clinging to his arm.

Her red hair was indeed something peculiar. Both her parents and in both of their families, and even her older sister and young brother, none of them had red hair. Only Riku had it. Her hair wasn't well liked, but even so, to her beloved father so admittedly affirm such was something she didn't think it would happen.

"Good-bye, Riku. Don't appear in front of the Barusak household ever again."\*3

And with this one word, Riku was thrown away.

For a moment, she felt like she was floating, but soon after that, she was able to hear the sound of the wind being cut through.

She was rapidly nearing the raging sea. The dark waves seemed to be inviting her, saying: "Come, come over here." As soon as she fell down, she was violently engulfed by the waves. Her entire view was filled with bubbles and the movement of the waves were breaking her body.

In desperation, Riku tried to make her way through the waves.

“Fa... a... Cough, cough... Father!”

Distant, on the peak of the cliff, she could see the silhouette of a person.

As if seeking for salvation, she was reaching out her hand. But soon, the next wave would come and hit her. The huge wave would sweep down on little Riku. All she could do was to try to hang on.

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There was a man that from very far above watching Riku disappearing into the waves.

It was Riku’s father, Raimon Barusak.

Wearing a coat which had the crest of the Barusak household on it, he was looking down at Riku. Within the raging sea, a tiny white hand could barely be seen, but a big wave would soon engulf it, then making it not possible to be seen anymore. The eye-catching red hair was nowhere to be seen.

“So, in the end there was nothing like a hidden power? A waste of expectation after all.”

The red hair rarely seen in this country and the super strength unimaginable to a seven years old.

If it wasn’t for those reasons, he would have certainly driven Riku Barusak out sooner. Raimon already knew Riku didn’t have any talent in spiritualist arts by the time she was five years old. Not known by Riku, in fact, Riku’s mother was killed around this time as someone useless that bore a powerless person.

“Then, father... Why didn’t you kill her sooner?”

Behind Raimon, a small shadow appeared.

A silver haired boy that had one of his eyes hidden by his hair was looking at him. Raimon kindly patted the boy’s head.

“It’s because there was a chance that that thing might have had a special power.”

“A special power, you say? I’ve never seen elder sister ever accomplish anything.”

The boy was puzzled.

Seeing the boy’s behavior, Raimon disagreed by shaking his head.

“That thing’s hair color was that red, right?”

“Yes, red.”

“There is a superstition that red haired which doesn’t resemble the parents hold hidden powers. Besides... That thing’s muscle strength is abnormal.”

Raimon narrowed his eyes.

The red hair that is rumored to hold hidden powers...

And Riku’s thin arms that can easily deal with those seemingly unmovable spear and two-handed sword, even though such should have been impossible. Even when carrying pots which require adults to put some effort in order to carry them, to her, not even traces of fatigue are seen. As if to be expected, she was almost able to carry near one hundred of them. Although in the end, she let them slip and broke all of them, to a normal seven year old child, rather than one hundred, carrying two or three at once is what would make something like that happen.

“That thing is abnormal.”

“But even so, elder sister didn’t hold any spiritualist powers in the end.”

To Rook’s response, Raimon nodded admittedly.

Riku was clearly abnormal.

But even then, she didn't have any spiritualist power.

The four year old Rook, who will eventually become the successor of the Barusak house, was already starting to distinguish himself over others as a spiritualist. Even if in the most impossible coincidence something was to happen to Rook, then just having the fifteen years old Raku marry someone should do it. In other words, comparing to demon banning power users, Riku with just her weird power wasn't really needed.

"Even though I thought the true nature of her powers would reveal themselves if she was at the brink of death... Rook, you must properly devote yourself as the successor of the Barusak household. You must not become useless like her. As your family, I'm putting my trust on you."

"Father, that's mean."

Rook grasped Raimon's big hand.

And then, made a sorrowful face.

"Saying it like this, doesn't that sound like I'm inferior to elder sister?"

"No, you've been properly making effort. Even though you are still four years old, you've even reached a realm at theory that not even me can compare. Without doubt, you are a genius that is born only once in a thousand years. Indeed... It is not in a level that can be compared to that thing. I'm expecting a lot of you."

"Yes!"

Turning his back from the cliff, Raimon left together with his to be successor son.

Rook, somewhat feeling lonesome, looked back at the cliff. Then, with a really tiny voice that even Raimon, who was walking next to him, didn't hear, he said.

"If she was a little bit cuter, I could have saved her... But even if I help her, she won't



really be of much help for the events anyway...”

“Did you say something, Rook?”

“No, it was nothing. But leaving that aside, father, I have something to talk regarding the administration of the territory. About the land in our earldom that was supposed to be given to elder sister; could it be given to me?”

“That plot of land? I don’t really have anything against... But that piece of land is that one which you can’t even cultivate wheat, you know?”

“There is no problem. I’m four years old already. I can properly manage the territory. As the next head of the Barusak household, for the sake of our people, and also for the sake of our standing as spiritualists, I’m looking forward to devote myself entirely.”4\*

Seeing Rook’s bright smile, Raimon felt relieved.

He was a successor that can really be relied on. For both the part of the territory administration and the spiritualist part, the Barusak household will be secure. For this too much excellent Rook, Raimon decided to give his all into raising him.

That was what Raimon’s heart decided.

And for the very excellent Rook’s imbecile elder sister... The name Riku Barusak will be removed from the family tree.

There was not even one person commenting over what happened to Riku.

Obviously the servants weren’t, but also the same was for the other fellow practitioners of demon banning arts that once had congratulated her parents when Riku was born, and even the elder sister and younger brother that remained; everyone had forgot about Riku’s existence. The Barusak household disgrace; as someone that didn’t have talent as a spiritualist, she was an existence that only by being there was an eyesore.

Rather, the number of people that were happily laughing behind the back about her disappearance was much higher.

In the future years, regarding this event, all Raimon Barusak have left to be told in the book of military history of the spiritualists was:

“To drop that thing down from the cliff... How foolish of me it was. If only I had just killed her personally at that time...”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 2**

# CONTRACT

Riku Barusak more or less always believed herself to be a special existence.

She believed so from the time she was born.

That is because even from the time she was born, she possessed knowledge. It wasn't the case of how one would be born and not know about anything, but rather, she was self-aware of memories that she shouldn't have ever experienced and have knowledge of.

In other words, she had memories of her previous life, or something of the sort.

In Riku's previous life, she used to be a girl without any distinguishing features. She used to have some problems with her school grades, used to be bullied by the classmates, used to run away from the reality to the otaku culture, and before being ran over by a truck, she used to lead a very ordinary day-to-day life.

But Riku didn't accept her previous world memories. Rather, she despised them.

Having some unknown person's memories inside oneself was nasty, although it couldn't be helped. And so, she completely ignored her previous life memories. The knowledge about things like televisions or cars was convenient to have, but she still didn't remember most of the more useful parts of her memories. If she wouldn't be able to remember such things, then it was worthless.

But there was a single thing that made her pay full attention to it. It was a memory about a certain game.\*1

Apparently, this game was of the gal game genre...

The game was about a demon banning arts practitioner main character that together with his very intimate friends\*2 was to fight the demon race that are trying to unseal their demon lord. Even so, the main objective of the game wasn't killing off the demon race, but rather, having the main character enjoy himself with the unfolding love of the cute

girls. The main character of the game was, in fact, her three years old little brother Rook.

In the game, Riku was introduced as the first harem member. At the point of time when the game started, she was the second sister who didn't stand out. About the settings, in Riku's childhood, her life was saved by Rook, and because of that, she started to deeply trust Rook. Or apparently so was it...

"Because at Rook's side is where I belong to."

While saying that and laughing, she would come forward to take personal care of him together with a big-breasted maid.

Strong in physical labor, in the starting quest, one would need to use Riku's strength for moving a big pot and discovering a secret door. But after the second week, you get an equipment item that let the other party members to move the pots as well.\*3 Basically, it means that even if Riku was not there, the story would be able to advance. In fact, other than that quest to move the pots, she doesn't really have much use.

Even so, after correcting the demon lord's sister, who led the demon army, at the scene when the world came to peace, right at the corner, she made an appearance. As far as it goes, Riku is a character that lives on until the end of the story.

Although she is useless.

While Riku hated her previous life memories, she was still interested in the memories about this game. The world is at peace now. The demons were active, but there has never been any moves causing big turmoil. Even so, undoubtedly, a great war will soon start. That's why raising her own power was necessary.

Even so, no matter what, Riku wasn't able to use the spiritualist arts. No matter how much she trained, she could only become stronger physically. At that pace, she wouldn't be able to be useful at anything.

But even so, she had known she was going to be saved in the end.

"Wasn't it because you had such a carefree life that you actually got careless?"

Somebody's voice came to her ears.

Yes, Riku had been careless.

She wasn't negligent at her training and was prepared to struggle to death with it. Right now, all she had was sheer muscle power, but perhaps after becoming an adult, while she wouldn't be a very good spiritualist, it would at least be enough for her to be able to stay at the Barusak household. But because of her previous life memories, she had become negligent. She had supposed she would be able to keep living there safe and sound by being together with Rook.

Yes, thinking like that wasn't something good.

"That's right. Because that happened... Because such a thing happened that all this was no good."

After being carried to the shore, she finally understood.

Because she had those memories, the herself that stupidly carried on with that overconfidence was hateful. With her previous life memories as someone that was worthless at anything, the herself that without even being aware of it became negligent was irritating.

No, was it really the herself of her previous life?

Riku started thinking about that. This wasn't anything like the memories of her previous life. For instance, it might as well have been nothing more than a simple book that was left in Riku's bedroom at some point in time. It was nothing more than a clump of unimportant information she didn't directly have relation to.

In other words, it was just another something that was completely unrelated to Riku Barusak.

Because of this mysterious something, her own life was turned into a mess.

Riku sank her nails in her forehead with strength. Blood was gradually flowing out. But after all that, this level of pain didn't matter at all. Dark feelings started to spread, filling

Riku's heart.

It was at that time.

“Yes, then, those memories are not needed.”

A black winged man then landed right in front of Riku.<sup>4\*</sup>

At this beach, which there wasn't supposed to be anyone, an obscure figure was standing. It was a beautiful young man that had black wings, and he was looking at Riku. Glancing at his black wings, Riku laughed.

“Are you a demon?”

“No, I am a shinigami.”

The shinigami was faintly smiling. In his hands, he was carrying a weird scroll.

In the seemingly old scroll, there were very tiny letters that were written very close to each other. Riku narrowed her eyes and read the letters.

“Contract writings... One may have one wish come true. In exchange for that, one must consent in giving up one's own soul... What kind of joke is this?”

“It's not a joke. I can grant you your wish. In exchange, I want to receive a soul. Actually, while in a certain way it is your own soul, this soul I want is this previous life soul of yours that is parasitizing your actual soul. Souls that are capable of possession have strong attachment to the world... If you let it ripen, it's very tasty.”

The shinigami licked his lips.

It was a long and red tongue that seemed more or less like a snake hunting for its prey. Seeing his scary and creepy expression, Riku started trembling a bit. But even so, she noticed she was actually attracted by his proposal.

“In other words, even if you were to grant a wish for me, I... Riku Barusak won't be really affected, right?”

“If I were to say, the memories of the soul possessing you... Well, it will be just about the existence of that thing you call “previous life memories” all being forgotten. Your own soul itself won't suffer any consequences. Of course, not even in the afterlife.”

“I see.”

The exact moment she had heard those words, her heart already decided what she was going to do.

As Riku got up, she looked in the drooling eyes of the shinigami. Seeing this, the shinigami perceived Riku's resolve. While having his eyes shining, he leaned forward. With a somewhat weird voice, he encouraged Riku.

“Now, say it. Do you want a bathtub overflowing with gold? Or perhaps good looks that are enough to make anyone prostate before you? Maybe dropping the hammer on someone that looked down on you?5\* Ah... If you give both your souls, I will give you a special service. I will grant you two wishes.”

“Place.”

Interrupting the shinigami, Riku started to say her wish.

While looking at the shinigami that was blinking at what she said before with cold eyes, Riku, with feelings coming from the depths of her heart, she raised her voice as if she was declaring something.6\*

“I want a place where I can belong to. A place where I can belong in which my power is recognized. I want to get a place I can belong, and for the Barusak household which threw me away... I will get revenge myself. I want to give hell to them who didn't accept my power.”

“Hmm...”

The shinigami looking bored was scratching his own cheek.



And then, he looked at Riku from head to feet.

“But you can’t use spiritualist powers, you know. Your super strength you were born with makes you unable to use your spiritual powers. If the structure of your body is not changed, you won’t be able to use spiritual power for the rest of your life. Ah, that’s right! Won’t you give your own soul as well? If you do that, I can not only prepare you a place to belong to, but also regarding the spiritual powers...”

“I don’t need it.”

Riku said with a clear voice.

Opposite from her skinny appearance, her eyes were shining from ambition.

“I have this power. So what if I won’t be able to use spiritualist powers? I am myself. I will make them understand... I will do so with my own powers!!”

Riku was showing a smile full of desire.

Seeing Riku acting like this, the shinigami kicked a pebble out of boredom.

“What, that’s boring. You can’t find a same opportunity that easily, you know?”

“As if I would want something like this because of that. Besides, if I get too greedy, I will end up getting overconfident again.”

“Tch... Just because I was thinking I was going to get to eat both souls. Well, I guess it can’t be helped.”

The shinigami held her head with his hand.

Faint light similar to fireflies started to surround Riku. Her feet distanced itself from the ground and she was slowly rising up in the air. But even so, she didn’t feel scared. She just kept up like that.

“If you keep going forward, you will obtain your place to belong to. But that is if you survive until then, though. Well then, I will be taking my payment.”

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The port city Perikka has always been very euphoric.

Foreign merchants minding their own profits, pirates that collected gold and silver treasures living extravagantly, the pleasure quarter that made profits by providing their services to the said pirates. The central avenue boasted of beauty comparable to the capital, but if one were to take one step inside the avenue, one could notice the alcohol smell wafting in the air even at daytime and see the figure of sailormen dead drunk.

The place Riku, who had lost everything, was driven to was this kind of port city. By that time, she had already lost the knowledge of the trade she did with the shinigami and of the game.

She woke up at the beach as if nothing happened and with much struggle finally reached this city.

“Atchoo!! Uuu... It’s cold...”

Since she was soaked in sea water, it couldn’t be helped that it was cold. Since there was no way there would be a towel for her to dry herself, she walked to the city as she was dripping with water.

Her beautifully tied red hair was moving one side to other as she walked. There was not even a single sign remaining that her clothes used to be gorgeous dress. The frills were torn and the cloth was so dirtied that it looked like an old rag. There was no way any person that walked by would ever think that she was of that prestigious Barusak household.

Remembering the home she couldn’t ever come back to, tears were about to form at her eyes.

“Let’s find a place to work for now...”

At the present time, Riku had neither a place to stay, nor money.

Even the seven years old Riku knew that because of her current situation, she needed to work and get money.

But there is no way the world could be such a nice place to live.

“Haa!? Why do I need to hire a filthy brat like you.”

She was bluntly rejected.

Riku was then carried by the belly and thrown out to the street. With a bam, the backdoor of the store was closed. Sucking her snot, she unsteadily got up. Leaning on the wall with her back, she looked at the firmly shut door.

“It’s really not going well...”

Riku sighed.

That was already the tenth time she was rejected.

Today, it was ten times, yesterday was fifteen times and the day before, the same number.

Something like a store that would hire a dirty frail seven years old was nowhere to be found. Riku waveringly stood up and left from where she was, starting to look for another store that seemed like it would possibly hire her.

Her belly was growling. Ever since she was thrown from the cliff, she hasn’t eaten anything. If she couldn’t at least find something to eat somewhere, she would end up dying. She didn’t really know what to do, but she certainly didn’t want to die. Such was the only feeling she was holding right now.

While she held her belly which was complaining from hunger, she turned to an alley. At that time, she felt as if somebody was gazing at her. Turning her head back, she noticed

that a group of dirty pirate-like men were gathered. While they were showing dirty smiles, they were talking to each other as if there was something fun happening around the place.

“There is a brat there. Probably a girl.”

“Let’s sell her.”

“Just as I wanted some money to go drink. That’s just right in time.”

“Hey, she is looking at us, that brat.”

Noticing Riku’s gaze was on them, they put up an expression of nice people. Then, they slowly approached Riku.

“Hey, little lady, what’s the matter? Are you lost?”

“Maybe you are hungry? Let’s give you something nice to eat.”

Riku’s back muscles stood up.

Contrary to their tender voices and gentle expressions, the men’s eyes were showing an impure darkness. The looks that seemed to be licking all her body that the men were giving was more disgusting than anything. Riku stepped back while shaking her head.

“There is nothing to be afraid of, you know?”

“Come over here. Let’s go together with the grandpas here. We will bring you to a place with food and beautiful clothes.”

“A very fun place.”

Riku was so scared she couldn’t say anything.

But it was dangerous to stay here. As if her instincts were being stirred up, she ran away

without giving a glance back.

“Hey, don’t run away!”

“Wait there!”

“Get her!!”

Behind her, she could hear the men from before spouting insults.

As expected, the gentleness from before was only a lie. Riku was now earnestly moving her feet. Running through the alley, she rushed out to a big avenue. While grandiosely dirtying up the street’s floor whose slabs were beautifully dyed, she ran away for now.<sup>7\*</sup>

If one were to talk about a big avenue, it would be about a place with many people coming and going through.

Among the people that were dressed up with clean clothes, there were people that avoided Riku, looking at her as something unpleasant, but most of them didn’t care about some dirty orphan at all and kept walking.

Riku was pushing aside and making her way through such people, deciding to be more important to get some distance from those men from before than caring about the people around at the moment. She used all her strength in doing so, and so, she had the impression that some of people she pushed aside had fallen down, but it was something that didn’t have anything to do to Riku’s situation right now.

“For now, I need to get away!”

She frantically moved her feet.

But even so, Riku was a child and the pursuing party were adults. Of course she wasn’t afraid of losing in physical strength. But the problem was that Riku was alone while there were three people after her. Moreover, Riku was now starving and couldn’t use all of her power. She couldn’t think of having chances to win.

Anyhow, if she stopped her feet, she would surely be caught. Thinking of any possible way to save herself, she started looking at her surroundings. And then, she noticed that there were some big barrels ahead. Barrels that were bigger than her stature.

“If I use that, it might work. Yes, if it is this much, it should work somehow.”

Riku rushed over next to the barrels.

Seeing them close up, they were big enough that even if Riku opened her arms wide, she wouldn't be able to carry it in her arms.

Even so, Riku somehow lifted up the barrel. They were very heavy, but it wasn't to be point of not being able to carry them. She had the impression of hearing a sound seemingly like what would be contents of the barrel shaking, but even so, she didn't mind. She didn't have the time to do so. The pursues, even now were about to catch up.

“Eat... THIS!!”

Riku threw the barrel with all her strength.

Riku made the barrel fall down amidst the crowd of people that were passing by and it made an explosion sound. The wine inside the barrel rained down upon the pedestrians.

It was something that happened very suddenly, so not only the pursuers, but the people walking at the street were surprised because of it.

“Waah!?”

“What the hell are you doing!? It was dangerous!”

“Who was the one that did this?!”

She didn't have the time to involve herself with the turmoil behind her.

Without giving a glance back, she once again started to run away.

Running and running and running and after that...

“Can’t... run anymore...”

Her sight was intensely shaking.

And then, just like that, she collapsed.

Raising a sound, she fell down into garbage in the back-alley. Its rotten smell and the smell of alcohol characteristic of the place was wrapping onto her as she remained unmoving.

Even in such state, she didn’t do anything to get out of that place. Her legs that should have been used to run until exhaustion were going through muscle pain. Her stomach was empty and her throat was dried up.

Because of how she had been running and how she had thrown that barrel, all the power that she had left has been used up.

The following path for an orphan that were at the limits of exhaustion and hunger was only one.

As an outcast of the society, she was going to silently meet death.

“”Ahh... In the end, I will die...””

With her cheek touching the cold ground, she aimlessly started to think.

...And her stomach was making a painful sound.

She asked herself how many days have it been since she has been thrown away into the sea. Riku didn’t know it, but one thing she did know was that she wasn’t able to eat anything for a very long time.

In the city that gathered various savage people, the only beautiful from the outside port city Perikka, there was no such thing as generous nobles doing charity around. Rather, there were more people that would kick around a child such as Riku. Being kicked certainly did hurt.

But the fact of how she had been thrown away by her dad is what hurt her the most.

She couldn't use spiritualist powers, and so she was driven out as something unneeded. That was all there was to her parent-child relationship with her dad in the end. Thinking about that, she felt a pain that was as if her heart had been gorged out.

In the exterior she was full of wounds, and in the inside she was full of wounds too. It hurt so much, so much that it was agonizing.

“”If that is what is going to happen from now on, maybe dying might be more peaceful. But... As expected, it is scary...””

Even though she wasn't going to be saved, she couldn't help but embrace a stupid hope.

Before such stupid herself, she self-mockingly laughed.

Somehow mustering power, she turned her head upwards. Up in there, there was a radiant sky with not even one cloud.

“Beautiful.”

She murmured.

She didn't exactly know why.

That sky was... It was as if the sky was blowing away the dirty gray of the streets. That was because it was such a radiant blue sky.

She came to think that the world was beautiful.



Before noticing, tears were already flowing to her cheeks.

Without sobbing or doing any sound, it was silently flowing.

“”If I die under such sky... Then, maybe it's fine.””

The beautiful sky made her forget the dirty back-alley that smelled like alcohol and cleared up the pain of her body and of her heart. If it was that sky, it would surely embrace and accept everything.<sup>8\*</sup>

Yes, by closing both eyes here... It will surely be possible to die with this peaceful feeling.

But even so, Riku couldn't close her eyes.

Somewhere inside her heart, something was calling.

It said that it didn't want to give up.

Even if it was for only a little longer.

Even now it felt like fading away, but it still looked forward to that fading hope.

In such a painful reality, it's obvious that peacefully dying is much better. There wasn't anyone going to save Riku; there was nobody that would gain anything from doing so.

A person that wasn't capable of anything was better off just dying here.

“”Even then, I still don't want to give up after all.””

Riku raised her hand.

Mustering the last drops of power she had, she extended her hand to that beautiful brilliant sky.

If she were to be able to grasp that sky, she felt like she would be able to obtain hope. It was something that was funny to the point of anyone to hold their stomach out of laughs. But even so, she had the feeling that it was true.

Obviously, that hand didn't grasp anything.

With all her strength used up, in an arc, her hand slowly fell down to the ground.

Or so was what it was supposed to happen.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 3**

# THE DEMON BOY

“No, you can’t die yet.”

In an instant, Riku’s hand was caught before falling down.

At this moment, a certain feeling of warm spread from her arm to her whole body. She then came back to her senses. It cleared away the apathy, and bit by bit the pain of her legs was disappearing.

As Riku was staring at the person in wonder, that voice had come from above.

“Wh...Who?”

The one that grabbed her arm was a youth that released a scary aura.

His glaring blue sharp eyes were looking through Riku. It was very far off from a gentle impression. The clothes he was using weren’t gorgeous clothes nobles and merchants would use, but shabby traveling clothes. The sword in the left of his waist didn’t seem to be of a good quality either.

No matter from which perspective one where to see him from, he didn’t look like someone that had the assets to be casually expending money on things. Moreover, in the gap of his clothes, it was possible to notice deeply scales of black color covering his arm, just like the color of his hair.

If he was a normal human, there was no way he would be growing scales in his arm.

Which meant that he was...

“De...mon?”

As her arm was being hold, she vaguely remembered about the demon banning arts textbook.

Demonkind... They looked like humans, but they were something that wasn't human. Parts of their body would have some kind of bestial feature; they were an wicked existence that are to be destroyed.<sup>1\*</sup>

They would boil humans in cauldrons to eat them, would kill them for pleasure, and even burn forests just to make them a wasteland.

They were dirty and cruel beings that didn't have even the slightest feeling of sympathy. Their vile existence were the enemy of spiritualists, no, the enemy of the humankind.

This enemy of the humankind was now extending his own hand to Riku. After that, she didn't have any idea on where all this would end up to.

At the back of Riku's mind, her father's words were coming to her.

"You see, demons are a nuisance. Part of their appearance are exactly just like humans, but that human part is just for deceiving and fooling us. They are cowardly and vulgar; they are the worst living beings on the world. If you let them deceive you, it's the end. May it be just getting killed, being eaten, being burnt to death; the only thing waiting for you is a future worse than slavery. Exterminating the whole demon race is the purpose of us, spiritualists, and protecting the royalty from them is the duty of the Barusak household."

Although those were many words, after being repeated many times by her father, they got ingrained in her mind.

Without doubt, the demon was doing this for its own sake.

Be it eating, be it killing, be it burning to death.

But she didn't know.

Riku didn't know what this demon intended to do with her.

“Leivein, are you sure you want to pick up this human?”

Another youth, who was using monocle, was looking at him from behind.

His ears that were being somewhat hidden by his hair were longer than those of a human. He too was of the demon race. Continuing what he was saying before, this youth spoke to the one he called Leivein.

“I am against it. While I have to recognize that that strength which allowed her to lift up that barrel was incredible, and that once she grows up, she could be of good use, but even so, this one is a human. Besides, doesn't the brooch pinned to her clothes have the crest of that Barusak family engraved on it? The Barusak is one of that spiritualist families. Bringing her is too risky. Also, she has red hair. Even in the demon race, there are basically nobody with this color of hair, and this is much more for the humans. Isn't this too suspicious? If you bring her into your battalion, what would happen if she were to betray you?”

“Piguro, are you blind?”

Leivein, in low voice, rebuked Piguro.

After hearing that, Piguro made a sour face as if he had eaten a bug. In one go, Leivein lifted her up, getting her to stand up. While she had more or less already recovered from her exhaustion, her legs were still hurting. Because of that, she twisted her face due to the pain. But without caring about it, Leivein kept talking.

“Indeed, this one is a human. And from the Barusak even.”

Leivein flicked the brooch that was pinned to her clothes, making a metallic sound.

No matter how she would be frowning at them, Riku could only hear their terms for now.

Physically, she didn't have the choice of running away. Even if she shook them off, she would be caught right after. Different from the men from before, she didn't have the confidence of being able to run away from the two people in front of her.

She could only hear out what was about to happen to her. To what she was going to be used for, or if she was going to be killed.

Only the worst possibilities were rushing through her head. As if it couldn't get worse, her face was starting to turn pale.

Being indifferent to how Riku was, Leivein kept talking to Piguro.

"I only care about one thing: whether this is going to be of benefit for the Demon Lord army or not. If it is for the Demon Lord army, it doesn't matter if she is a human."

"But!"

"See for yourself. Look at her eyes. They are eyes that clearly have the desire to keep living. If it is her, there is no way she is going to betray the Demon Lord army."

Leivein straightened the collar of the clothes Riku was using at one go.\*2

All the garbage that was clinging to her was falling down from her clothes. Some of the garbage dirtied Leivein's arms a bit, but it didn't seem he was caring about it.

"Little girl becoming of red, tell us your true name."

"..."

Riku was hesitating.

Something like saying one's own name was like offering oneself everything to the other party.

The young Riku still didn't know the exact details, but she remembered she was taught that if a name is taken hold of, it was possible to use it to bind the soul of the person in question.

It wasn't something that you could reveal to anyone you've never seen or known. Now, for the savage demons, it was even more the case. Besides, as a member of one of the spiritualist families, something such as giving a demon your name was like an act of sacrilege.

But if Riku didn't say it now, she would be killed.

After reaching her limit, she told them her name.

“Riku.”

“What, is that even a name? I won't say it twice. Tell us what your “true name” is.”

She started to shiver.

She felt a feeling of dread going through her. She was already at death's doorsteps, but what she felt was something that seemed to drive her further into a even deeper abyss.\*3

And the traveling mantle that was covering his upper part of the body rose up with an intense force.\*4 From within the gap of the mantle, there was wings hiding, which seemed sharp. If it was something like a body of a little girl like Riku, it looked like they would easily be able to pierce through.

That's why unconsciously...

“Ri...Rinkus.”

She ended up saying it.

It was the first time since she was born that she said the name only her and her parents knew.

And even so, it was to a demon that she had only met.

“Rinkus, is it? I see, that's why it is Riku.”



To Leivein's indifferent words, Riku nodded without saying anything.

To her current state, that was all she was able to do.

Leivein was still making a stern face, but it seems that he loosened up a bit.<sup>5\*</sup>

“And with that, I got hold of your name. By me saying that, you know what it means, right?”

“Ye-yes...”

Whether it is being eaten or being killed. Maybe even being burned to death or something even worse.

Only scary possibilities were going through her head. She was very so weak and didn't have any talent, so she was thrown away, and now she was picked up by a demon. She could only curse her unhappiness by how very unlucky she was.

“It's here! That red haired girl!”

The muscles of her back stood up.

Her trembling aggravated.

The owner of that voice was without doubt one of the men that were going after her before. With that, the street was becoming more turbulent.

Until the men showed up, it wouldn't be too long.

“Hey, brother. Can you hand over the girl there?”

“Why? Is this one your relative?”

“No, it is just a slave that ran away from my place. So, can you hand her over now?”

As he pointed his finger to Riku, he started saying a bunch of things.

Her body was urging her to run away.

But her legs were like two unmovable sticks. Even if they were to move, the strength to shake off Leivein's grasp and run away was lacking.<sup>6\*</sup>

Riku then timidly glanced at Leivein's face.

“Hou, then this is a slave?”

As he said that, he showed a smile that was atrocious to no bounds.

Riku, who had seen from very close his smile, had the fear she was feeling regarding the men that were after her blown off. But it didn't mean that she the fear had disappeared.

With those few words, with that expression... She was made known that that this demon was much scarier than the men. That said, even then, she didn't feel like running away to those men. Even if she went with them, it didn't seem like it would lead to a good thing.

Either of the options was hell to Riku.

“But, this is already mine. I don't intend to give it to you.”

“What did you say?! ... Then, properly pay up. Hand over ten gold coins.”

“Ten gold coins? Don't talk nonsense. It's only a brat that is about to die. Even if it is female, twenty silver coins should do it, no?”

Not caring about how Riku was trembling, Leivein was negotiating with the men nonchalantly.

“Twenty silver? Don’t spout bullshit, you hobo!”

“At least one gold coin.”

“As if I would need a person that is about to die pay me only one gold coin. Ahh, after you die, I can take the money from the insurance of your death instead, right? Though, I won’t be killing you off that easily.”

“What the heck are you saying?!”\*7(It is most likely Piguro the one that said this)

“If only you would let me finish saying what I was going to...”

The men clenched their fists, and for those that were carrying it, they readied the blunt weapons.\*8

It seem they intended to steal Riku back by force.

“It’s enough. Together with this little girl, we will sell you off as slaves.”

But it was too early to say such things.

The men started attacking, clearly aiming for Leivein. Leivein’s right hand was still grasping Riku. Aiming for both Riku’s and Leivein’s heads, the men were about to swing down their blunt weapons. Riku became scared and tightly closed her eyes.

“Even though you are just small fry.”

Then, Riku heard a sound of air being cut.

And together with that, a lukewarm liquid stuck to Riku’s face. Even with her eyes closed, it was obvious enough to know what it was about. She was able to tell that by this mood that seemed to make the surroundings vibrate.\*9

“Ah, Leivein is always too fast when it is about these kind of things. Even though I was looking forward to killing them...”

Piguro's astonished voice was heard.

Riku reluctantly opened her eyes. Leivein was showing a calm expression.

"It's Leivein's bad habit. Picking up abandoned people, you see. Now that he involved himself, he will take responsibility until the end... But, if you try to do anything weird, I will promptly break your neck, alright?"

Piguro was shaking his head while saying "good grief".

Leivein remained silent.

"Y-YOU! What have you done!?"

One of the men's trembling voice resounded.

When Riku looked towards the direction of the voice, she screamed.

What was there was a red sea that was spreading through the ground. Amidst this sea was the upper halves and lower halves of two men that were cut in half. One was the one coming with blunt weapon to hit them, while the other was one that intended to use his own fists. Because of the fear, Riku raised her eyes upwards, looking at the sky.

"What have I done, you say?"

Leivein snorted.

Without notice, he lightly shook off the blood of the blade that was on his left hand. At the point of the sword, there was still some of the blood sticking to it.

"The ones that attacked were you, wasn't it? This is only self-defense, you see? What are you going to do about it?"

“Self-defense!? This is too much!!”

“Too much? These guys were weaker than me, and simply became dead bodies. That’s all there is to it.”

The man that heard Leivein’s response soon after came at him while shouting something. The knife that he was holding gave off a dim light.

“Just a little surprise attack... You, didn’t you see how your friends got killed? For what sake is your head attached to your body?”

Said Leivein with a bored tone.

Without hesitation, he swung down his sword and hit his neck. The body that had lost its head stopped moving and as it sprayed blood, it fell down to that red sea. It was an overwhelming difference in power. In the end, the knife couldn’t even get near Riku and Leivein.

Riku looked at the knife that was lying on the ground in surprise.

“Rinkus Barusak.”

Her name was called.

It felt like her heart was tightly held.

Leivein was still holding his sword with his left hand. That sword, could maybe be used to cut off her neck as well. As she thought of that, she could only become even more scared. Before noticing, Riku was once again trembling.

“If I leave you alone that way, you will end up getting caught by the friends of the fellows lying there. Your body and heart will tattered into pieces and you will end up having a pitiful and insignificant death.”

She was being lifted up by her neck almost as if it was going to be twisted

Resisting her fear, she was able to look ahead somewhat. Leivein's serious face was there in front of her eyes.

But even so, although the face he was making was supposed to be a serious one, she eventually stopped trembling after looking at him.

"If you are going to die anyway, then come at my place. As long as you have this life that had been saved, use your power for the demon lord army and die for its sake."

Leivein's words that seemed like a death sentence was very scary.

But different from the fear Riku had experienced before, maybe it could be said that her fear had actually lessened up a bit.

Riku was perplexed by it as she wondered why.

"If you do that, I can at least guarantee to provide you with life necessities."

Leivein's blue eyes then became overlapped with the radiant blue sky.

What was left from the fire called hope was little by little being relighted. Although her heart was supposed to be cold, somewhere in there, it was becoming warm. The moment her trembling completely stopped, she understood...

That for now, she was saved.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 4**

# THE HIDDEN VILLAGE OF THE DRAGON DEMON BATTALION

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Demons are a lowly barbarians. They are similar only in appearance, but are not human. Part of their bodies have bizarre bestial aspects and they are rabid like beasts. They have already destroyed many countries, and by their hands, in the end, even the Shiidoru kingdom befell. The reigning king of those days, Fifus Shiidoru was a very kind king, but in the face of the approaching demon lord army, there was only one conclusion.

“I can’t bear see the country being invaded and how people are suffering.”

The kind king Fifus proposed peace.

Together with only a few troops, he went to the demon territory to attend to an audience. But in the place where the audience was supposed to happen, the Demon Lord decapitated the defenseless king. In cold-blood, he discarded the path to peace that the Shiidoru king was reaching out for. The demons that don’t know the word “negotiation” marched towards the capital without any concerns for what happened.

With resolve, the king’s eldest son, Shikus Shiidoru decided put his life on line. He decided that since all was lost, then, they should fight to the end for the sake of the remaining surviving citizens.

But the spiritualist families were against such idea

“If the king dies, the people living within the kingdom die as well. We can’t win against the demon lord, but if we are able to seal him, then this should delay their invasion.”

The prince Shikus accepted the proposal of the spiritualist families.

Together with five spiritualists, he had gone to seal the demon lord.



The prince Shikus' party battled against the demon lord in a death match that extended to three days and three nights. In the fourth day, at the sunrise, they were finally able to achieve piercing the sealing sword through the demon lord.

While spouting words full of resentment, the demon lord finally stopped moving.

Since the demon lord's sealing, the demon lord's army had lost its command and became disorganized. The demons that had only intelligence of animals wouldn't be able to act with intelligence until they raised their next ruler. The demons that were now bit by bit crumbling down were all hunted down by prince Shikus and the spiritualists.

With the demon retreating, the Shiidoru kingdom attained its peace.

However, the demon lord still wasn't dead.

Since then, the families of those five spiritualists had been guarding the place the Demon Lord had been sealed.

[Shiidoru kingdom's publication on the spiritualist military story, extracted from the volume of the sealing of the Demon Lord ]

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It was several days since they left Perikka city.

While desperately moving her feet, Riku kept thinking.

She couldn't keep up with Piguro and Leivein, who were walking ahead of her, very well. Even when she got her foot stuck in a tree root, or when she would fall down and get hurt, they wouldn't give a glance. Instead, they would keep walking through the forest.

Maybe if she stopped, they would leave her behind. But strangely, the thought of running away didn't come to her mind. Even if they were the demons that could easily kill humans, they considered her something needed. To meet those expectations, Riku earnestly kept moving her feet.

“...”

Riku looked at Leivein's back.

After killing the men, he gave Riku food and water. He also treated her injuries. Whether it is pain or cold, she wasn't feeling either anymore.

But after that, he didn't speak one word to her. Piguro, who was walking next to him, would at best look at her like she was some dirty thing, but in Leivein's case, he didn't even look at her.

That's why Riku was getting anxious. Even though it wasn't cold anymore, somehow, she ended up feeling cold somewhere.

Maybe it was actually better to only think about the vantages of food and housing she would get with them.

“Ah, we are finally here. Even though I was hoping she wouldn't make it...”

Piguro, which walked a bit further ahead murmured in a tired way.

Both Leivein and Piguro stopped walking, and so, so did Riku. Apparently, the forest ended here. The both of them were taller than Riku, so she wasn't able to see what was ahead through the forest from the position she was at that moment.

“Riku, come here.”

“Y-Yes!”

Leivein's sudden words went through Riku.

Hearing that voice she hadn't heard for some time, she vaguely felt a warm feeling. Riku cheerfully went next to him.

Seeing the sight that was located in the deeper parts of that forest, she unconsciously let out a surprised voice.

“Waah!”

What was there was a town within a valley.

The very steep cliff walls that were as if it had been shaved off, had many deep holes dug through it. The places that seemed to be entrances had each a cloth with a pattern Riku had never seen hanged in front of it. They were probably being used as dividers. Another remarkable thing was the flag with a dragon drawn on it fluttering with the wind.

It was different from what Riku was expecting from a demon city. She imagined a little remote and desolate village because of her bias. Even so, the village that ascended through the cliff wall in front of her was still something that she could accept as a demon village if someone were to tell her that it was. That was because that was a hidden village away from human villagers and surrounded by cliffs in the middle of nowhere.

“Is here a demon village?”

“No, it isn't.”

Leivein said as he shook his head.

And then, they calmly came closer to the village.

Riku was walking as if she was trying to hide behind Leivein's shadow.

Within the open field which was surrounded by the cliffs, there were muscular demons polishing their sword techniques. There were also demons drawing their bows and hitting targets. Demons clashing against each other fist to fist, making one another bleed, was

another thing seen there.

There were also demons that, by being kicked, were sent flying all the way to the rock wall of the cliff. There were demons that, while vomiting blood, were being attacked by demons that seemed to be their instructors.

Yes, the demons were doing battle training.

“Ah, captain Leivein!”

Just as Leivein got closer to him, the muscular demons went on their knees right away.

Riku was immediately taken back. Leivein's stature was only more or less higher than Riku's. Even so, to Leivein, who couldn't be considered anything more than a youth, many muscular demons lowered their heads.

“Welcome back, captain Leivein!!!!!”

“Hm.”

To Leivein, it was nothing more than an usual spectacle. The expression on his face didn't change even one bit.

Riku, without knowing what to do, while hiding behind Leivein, looked at the demons who were all bowing down. As she did that, she ended up exchanging glances with a demon that had a wolf head. The wolf headed demon narrowed his eyes as if he was surprised by something and his nose started to move as he was sniffing something.

“Captain, who is this little girl? For some reason, she smells like human.”

“Yes, she is human.”

Without hiding anything, Leivein declared.

Right at that moment, the demons that were bowing down before all stood up at the same

time. All of them were the same as to what kind of looks they were giving to Riku. There were some that were even showing their teeth. That feeling that was as if each part of their body was like a blade full of killing intent, although it didn't completely overwhelm her, it still wasn't something possible to bear. Riku unconsciously started to step back.

“There is nothing to be scared of, Riku. It is only killing intent.”

Leivein said as he kept looking ahead unfazed.

But even if one were to say to not be scared of that, rather, not being scared of it is what was weird. But even so, Leivein's orders were absolute. From the time he got hold of her name, she couldn't disobey his words.

With that, while still trembling, Riku held her ground.

“Here is the fourth army's first battalion base, which I am in command of... It is normally called the Garrison of the Dragon Demon Battalion. In times of peace, it provides war training.”

“Captain Leivein!”

The wolf headed demon from before raised his voice.

He had called for Leivein, but his eyes were still on Riku.

“Captain! This one is human. Don't tell me captain Leivein intends to have her as your subordinate!”

“Five-men leader Vrusto, do you have eyes for nothing? It's obvious I am doing so.”

“Wha!?”

“This one is a human. One overflowing with talent.”

“I'm firmly against it!!”

Vrusto was tightly clenching his hands into a fist.

Riku was startled. From the gap between his fingers, a bit of blood was flowing out. She wondered how much power he was putting in clenching his hand.

“Humans are scoundrels. Throughout all those hundreds of years, they’ve been oppressing us demons. Did you forget that they sealed the Demon Lord just when he was unarmed for their audience to negotiate peace? They even put the blame of the death of their king onto the Demon Lord!!”

“Eh?”

Riku was wondering if she had heard correctly.

Those words were completely the opposite of all that story she had kept hearing throughout her whole life.

Seeing her surprised face, Vrusto sneered at her.

“See? Please, look at her. She is even playing dumb; this little girl. Even if such type of people were to join in, there won’t be any meaning to it. Moreover, that brooch on her clothes... Isn’t it exactly like the crest from that famous spiritualist family?”

“That’s right, captain! This girl is definitely trying to trick you!”

“First of all, that red haired brat feels kind of repugnant. I have no idea what captain could even be thinking to do that.”

“Please, reconsider this.”

To Vrusto’s words that kept coming were followed by the words of other demons that were beside him. Each of those words pierced through her heart deeper and deeper. It felt as if they were squeezing her. She hesitantly looked at Leivein’s face.

While the words from the demon's were coming, Leivein closed his eyes. From his expression, it was impossible to make out anything except that the mood of the situation was getting colder and colder.

The warmth from before went away as if it wasn't there from the beginning. Right now, Riku was so cold, but so cold that it was as if everything had been to no use.

If this keeps up like that and Riku ends up being driven away, what would she be supposed to do?

"I see. Indeed, there is some truth to it. But this one can be useful. Therefore, I will recruit her. That's all. And you all guys hear it out clearly. No matter her origin or race, from this day, she is one of the Dragon Demon Battalion."

As Leivein declared that, Vrusto became perplexed.

The others that were supporting Vrusto were also surprised as they looked at Leivein. Without caring about their expressions, Leivein indifferently announced.

"Five-men leader Vrusto, I will bother you to be the one in charge of taking care of her. Properly train her."

"What!? Mee!!?"

"Don't complain. Just do it."

Leivein then finally gave a glance to Riku.

The vivid blue eyes reflected the figure of a little Riku on them. As she noticed it, in order to see it better, she fixed her posture.

"The victorious side can change the past to their convenience. Your ancestors won against the demon lord. That's why we, who lost, got our history tainted. That is the same for your hair. It's very uncommon, and so, no matter how beautiful it is, it will be despised. The weak people and the strong minority can't go against a group of strong people. That's all there is to it. Make sure to remember this."

And then, he patted her head.

While Leivein was gently stroking her red hair...

“You must overpower all that opposes you. I am expecting a lot from you, Riku.”

After only saying that, together with Piguro, he left the area.

All Riku and the other demons who remained could do was to see them walk away while still being dumbfounded. But then, one by one, each went back to each one's respective activity. And then, only Riku and Vrusto were left.

“Really... But if it is captain's Leivein's orders, it can't be helped. But again, why the heck did he bring something like a human. Captain sure have weird hobbies, huh... Hey, brat! Come here.”

While scratching his head, Vrusto shouted.

It was possible to hear a few complaints being muttered, but none of them entered Riku's ears. She touched the place where Leivein had patted her, and then looked back to the direction where he left to.

Demons are bad people.

Their appearance were different from humans and they had a scary glare.

Moreover, the history of the past they knew was different from the history she had been told.

But even so, she, who didn't have anywhere to go, was given a place to belong to. Only, it was forcefully done so.

Those demons... Were they good demons?



No, there was no way there would be good demons. Seeing the fiendish side on how , without hesitation, the men from before had been cut into pieces, there was no way to say that good demons exist.

Inside her head, Riku became surrounded by many doubts.

“If you keep wasting time there, I will kill you, brat!!”

With Vrusto angry shout, Riku came back to her senses.

Since a little ago, Vrusto was waiting for Riku. With how he was stomping the ground with his feet many times, it was obvious that he was in a bad mood.

“Y-yes, I’m coming!”

Whether that demon was a good person or a bad person was something she didn’t know.

She didn’t know it well, but for now, she needed to leave those thoughts to later.

In the end, Riku didn’t have anywhere to go. And so, she wanted to at least try to give her best, since here, there was somebody that accepted her own self, even if it was only by a little bit. And by only that, she felt that now things would go well.

Putting her hand onto her for the first time praised red hair, she went running.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 5**

# **.THE SHARPENED SWORD AND THE THROWN AWAY SWORD**

Following after Vrusto, Riku arrived at a cave.

Pushing away the cloth that was in front of the entrance, they went inside it. The place was dimly dark. It was somewhat chilly too. Right as Riku started rubbing her own arms, Vrusto laughed with his nose.

“Is it really so cold you can’t even stand it?”

“Five-men leader Vrusto, isn’t it cold for you?”

“Not even a bit. It’s because I am covered in fur... Hey, here.”

With his hand, Vrusto signed her to come in a rude manner.

As she came closer, she noticed in there was a great variety of weapons side-by-side. Because it was somewhat dark, she didn’t know well, but starting from swords, there were spears, axes and weapons that looked like bows tightly organized next to each other. It seemed like that cave was an armory.

“Anything inside here is fine. Choose the one you think you can handle the best.”

“Uhh... But it’s dark and I can’t see very well.”

“Do you want me to light a fire for you? Stupid, what do we do if it lights up the gunpowder? Well, most of demons can see well in the dark, so this level of darkness usually wouldn’t have been much of a thing.”

To Vrusto’s blunt response, Riku didn’t say anything else.

As expected demons and humans were very different. But if that is the case, why was it that Leivein had chosen to take Riku into his battalion? Next time, she decided she should try asking that if possible. As Riku was thinking about that, her eyes laid on a certain weapon.

“It can be any weapon, right?”

“Yeah... By the way, have you ever even touched a weapon?”

“More or less.”

From a very early age, in order to fight against demons, she had been practicing to use varied arms.

She had trained with them, although she couldn't imbue the weapon with spiritual power. As she remembered her training, she became kind of solitary. Her father wasn't there to train her anymore. Because she was now a member of the demon army, it was now completely impossible for her to visit the Barusak residence. Meeting her father, or her little brother, or her a bit prideful older sister; all of it was now impossible. Whether it was her impression or not, she felt her view blurring a bit.

“Hey, choose something. Stop wasting time.”

“...Yes.”

Riku rubbed her eyes with the sleeves of her clothes. And then, she started to look for a weapon.

Thinking back of the weapon most easy to handle at the training, she tried touching many two-handed swords. But because she had trained many times with the same sword, she couldn't find anything that felt like it matched her. Putting the swords back, she looked overhead. Up there in the corner, she fixed her eyes on a certain spear. With a single glance, one would think it was very much like a spear. However, right on the tip of the spear, there were attached an sharp axe shaped blade and the hook at the other side. Right at the moment Riku saw the tip, unconsciously...

“A halberd!”

She unconsciously shouted.

Just by the appearance of the weapon, it was cool, but because it could not only cut, but also thrust, sweep, and other things, that it was possible to fight in many different ways with the weapon. But its flexibility also demands a lot of ability to handle the weapon. Actually, among the spiritualists of the Barusak household, the amount of people that could properly use the weapon were very few.

Since long ago Riku, liked halberds. As she would play with a training halberd made of wood, she would be always imagining that when she became a spiritualist, she would wield a halberd to fight off the demons.

The dream of her wielding a halberd perhaps would actually come true.

“I will chose this one.”

Riku took the halberd to her hand.

The very heavy weight weighted down onto her arms. It was many times heavier than the training halberd she had made at home. But, strangely, the weight felt very well fit. Besides, if it was this level of heaviness, then it was something that she would eventually get used to. Knowing the basics of spear wielding, she tried to lightly spin it in her hand. With that, the sound of air being cut was possible to be heard. She felt like there was nothing more perfect than that.

“What? You will choose this one?”

Vrusto raised his voice intensity by one level.

“Don’t choose this one. It is too hard for you.”

“I will learn.”

“It’s not at the level of managing to use it somehow just by learning it. For starters, it

should be something like that sword, or maybe a spear.”

“Thank you. But it’s fine for me. When I was still at home, I used to train with a training halberd. Besides, you told me to choose anything I wanted, right?”

“Well, certainly it kinda feels fitting on you... Ok, change your clothes there. After changing your clothes, go to the place marked on the map. It will be training.”

As Vrusto gave a big sigh, he threw to Riku some kind of package.

As she caught the packadge with the hook of the halberd, without saying anything, Vrusto left the place. Opening the package, inside there were clothes and something that seemed to be a map. Stretching the clothes, she noticed that it was the same kind of military clothes Vrusto was wearing. Because of the darkness, she wasn’t certain of its color, but if it was the same as the one Vrusto was wearing, it should be dark green. Changing into the clothes, when she passed her arm through the sleeves, she noticed they were a bit long to her. But it still wasn’t to the extend which she would need to fold the sleeves. Finishing wearing the uniform, she moved the halberd to her shoulder.

“Alright.”

After leaving the armory, using the map given by Vrusto, she started walking, heading to the place.

On the way, she has been given glances, but when she would look at the direction of those glances, there wouldn’t be anybody looking at her anymore. All there would be was demons that were doing nothing but sword training. While thinking how strange it was, Riku reached to the place it was marked in the map.

In the center of that place that was similar to some kind of arena, Vrusto was swinging some kind of wooden sword. Before Riku could say anything, Vrusto’s nose moved. And then, turning to her direction, he pointed the tip of the sword to her. Right away, Riku readied her halberd. Vrusto laughed using his nose as he saw Riku’s defensive stance.

“You came, brat. Let’s start this training at once.”

Vrusto threw to her direction a wooden weapon. In its tip, there were the axe and hook

parts of the halberd which were made of wood. It was a wooden halberd. Riku made a discontent face.

“This is a training halberd?”

“It’s better like that. This is training after all. See? I am going to use one against you too.”

Vrusto was showing a provocative smile.

Riku left her halberd lying on the ground and readied herself with the wooden halberd. If it was a training halberd, then she had already used it many times. That’s why she thought everything would be fine somehow. Deciding where to aim, she rushed at Vrusto aiming for his neck.

But Vrusto, as he was showing a carefree smile, lightly stroke the halberd away. Although it was lightly hit, the trajectory of the halberd changed. Then, without mercy he hit Riku, who was still trying to recover the direction of her weapon, right at her arm.

“It hurts!”

Because the shock and the pain that went through her arm, Riku let go of her halberd.

But even so, Vrusto didn’t stop attacking. Aiming at the now unarmed Riku’s belly, he kicked her with all his strength. With the blow, Riku had lost some air from her lungs. With no time to suffer from the pain, a strong force went through her back. She was thrown all the way to the wall.

Her belly and back hurt, and her arm too. It wasn’t as much as that time when she was at Perikka, but it still hurt so much that it felt like tears would start coming out of her eyes.

“Stop wasting time. Stand up already and come!”

Vrusto once again pointed his training weapon to Riku.

Riku unsteadily got up. She trained so much before, but even so for some reason her feet and arms weren’t doing well enough. At the time she was still doing training at the

Barusak household, it had always been said of her that her spiritual arts were very lacking, but even so, that her physical strength was reasonably good. But even so, not even one attack went through him. Vrusto gave a look at Riku as if he was troubled.

“Certainly compared to human brats, you are superior. But...”

Immediately after she picked the wooden halberd up, Vrusto’s training sword was already closing up to her.

Riku panicked. Putting her strength in her halberd, she somehow pushed the blow aside. But right after that, she felt a strong blow to her belly even though she had properly defended the training sword. Due to her intense pain, she crouched while putting her hands onto her belly. And finally...

“Why...?”

This word had left her mouth.

As she moved her eyes up a bit, she saw Vrusto in a posture which he had his right knee raised up. In the end, it seemed that the pain was from the knee strike he had done. But even so, Riku couldn’t understand. The kick from before and the knee from this time... It happened even though they were doing training with weapons. She wondered why would he use such moves.

As if he had read her mind, Vrusto laughed at her as if he was looking down on her.

“You are wondering why I used kicks and the sort, right? Stupid. The technique you are using is only for fencing. From now on, you will be going to the battlefield. There, you won’t need cute techniques. Put this onto your head!”

Vrusto lightly swung his training sword.

Despite how she was crouched down now, the sword was quickly approaching. Rolling on the ground, Riku evaded the attack. Picking up her own weapon, she tried to somehow defend once again from the next attack. She frowned at the weight of the blow that was put on her weapon. It was possible to hear the floor cracking by the force that was onto her feet. Because of all the weight, she was starting to hear cracking sounds from her arms.



While gritting her teeth, she somehow was able to resist. As she did so, Vrusto whistled, pleased with what happened.

“Hou, you defended. Then, what about this?”

Right at the corner of her field of vision, she noticed Vrusto moving his left foot.

Then, Riku instantly jumped back. It was just how much she didn't want to be kicked at her belly again. But his right foot, without even being aimed at her, just like that, was put down to the ground. Vrusto, who was leaning forward, was now aiming for Riku's legs. Just as Riku landed, she was hit and lost her balance.

“Waah!”

Tripping up, Riku fell down in an unsightly manner.

An excruciating pain was echoing from her spine through her whole body. Her vision was gradually becoming blur. Riku's whole body was in so much pain that she couldn't bear. If it was the Riku from before, she would have probably screamed and cried. But she knew that now, if it was just this much, she shouldn't do this sort of things.

Before Vrusto could provoke her, she unsteadily got up. While straining her feet to keep standing, she readied her halberd, full of fighting spirit. While lowering her stance, she was deciding where to aim.

“Hee, you can still stand up? I wonder until when you will be able to keep this up.”

At a nice timing, Vrusto swung his weapon. Aiming at Riku's flank, he swung his sword down. Riku, who could only keep looking to the front, without being able to react received the blow. The pain, which would remain unvoiced, ran from her flank to the whole body. While tightly holding her halberd, she fell down to the ground.

Kicking Riku, who fell down to the ground, Vrusto said.

“Listen to this, alright? Never lose your composure. You must only think on how to kill your opponent!

“...”

Riku half opened her eyes and looked at Vrusto's movement. Out of boredom, Vrusto was tapping his shoulder with his training sword. He must have thought that Riku wouldn't be able to get up for some time. He was now uninterestedly looking at the sky.

Then, her mouth was formed into a smile.

To only think on ways to kill your opponent. All she had learned until now was how to infuse spiritual power onto equipment and how to use such equipment. The formal way to use weapons was almost like an already decided rule. If she were to get older, perhaps, she would have learned more practical forms, but she was thrown out before being able to reach to this point.

“Really, for you to not be able to stand up again... In the end, humans are humans...”

Out of boredom, he started to whistle.

With aim to Vrusto's legs, tightly holding her halberd, she thrust it at him, who was now slacking. Because of the surprise from the sudden attack that came from bellow, Vrusto unsightly raised his voice. Using this chance, she got up in a way that looked as if she had jumped.

“Take this!!”

Aiming for the unguarded private parts, Riku swung her fist and hit there.

Vrusto, who took such a direct hit, twisted his face in pain. It must have hurt a lot, she had thought. With bulging eyes, Vrusto's full of fur face became twisted. He leaned over as he was holding his private parts. Lowering her weapon, Riku felt as if she did something unforgivable. But she didn't really do anything wrong. Vrusto said to only think in ways to kill the opponent. He didn't only use his weapon, but also used kicks and so.

That's why Riku decided to think she didn't do anything wrong...

But hearing his groans, she started to doubt whether she actually did the right thing.

“Uhh... Are you alright?”

“If it seems like I am alright, then you are fucking blind.”

Looking at Vrusto’s eyes, it was possible to see his tears shining.

Riku averted her eyes from Vrusto. She started feeling like running away from this awkward situation. But before anything, right at the corner of her vision, there was a blow coming. Even though she had her weapon lowered down, Riku immediately shoved aside the incoming blow.

“Tch, you avoided it.”

The one attacking was none other than Vrusto, who was a few moments ago groaning on the ground.

Riku was making a surprised face.

“Are you alright?”

“Stupid. There is no way I am alright! It hurts to the point of making me want to cry!! If you can’t handle this much, you would just die in real battles!!”

Vrusto’s sword was being aimed at her neck.

Receiving the blow with the hook, she tried to kick Vrusto at his belly. But right away, her foot was caught, and then she was thrown away.”

“Don’t just go for kicks!! You gotta think your next moves!”

Vrusto’s angry yell were resounding through the training site.

From then on, it isn't known for how much time this carried on. It was all pretty much just swinging weapons and Riku being hit, kicked and sent flying. But even so, with determination, she kept standing up again and keeping it up. This, countless times repeating it.

“Well then, that's it for today.”

When Vrusto finally declared that, the sun was already setting.

The sky to the west was faintly red and the first stars were already possible to be seen. Riku exhaustedly sat down.

“Tomorrow, we will be continuing on with that. Hey, for now, go take a bath. After that, it will be dinner.”

And then, Vrusto threw a towel to her.

A white towel fell down onto Riku's head. It was worn out by its long use, but even so, it was a very clean white towel. Riku then timidly looked to Vrusto.

“Hmmm? What is it, brat? I will already be saying, but the only reason why I'm taking care of you is all because captain Leivein ordered me to. Otherwise, there would be no way for me to be bothered by some human brat. You should be thanking the captain.”

After saying that, Vrusto left the place to somewhere,

In the training arena, only Riku was left. Using her wooden halberd to get up, she grasped the towel.

Then, looking forward to go to the bath, she started going her way, but suddenly had to stop.

“Ah... I forgot to ask where the bathing place is...”

With those words not being heard by anyone, her silhouette vanished within the dark sunset.

---

A few hours later, on that same day, through the royal capital, there was a small shadow running.

Even though it was already very dark at night, the person was using a hat to hide the face. The shadow was vigorously running through a back-alley. In the shadow's small hands, there was a letter that had been crumpled to a paper ball.

The name of that person was Kurumi. Behind the hat, were long squirrel ears hidden; ones that only demons would have. She was a girl that was tasked on infiltrating the capital's taverns. Because the taverns would gather guards serving the nearby castles and spiritualists, it was the perfect place to gather information for the Demon Lord's army. While doing simple chores, that girl, who would gather information at all those nights, including this one, with all her efforts, was finally able to find an information that could be influential to the demon lord's army.

"Finally... I was finally obtained something. With that, I can finally say farewell to going to those alcohol stinking places! Going back to the demon capital, I can finally live in a house that doesn't have cracks and holes blowing cold wind!"

"Unfortunately, that's as far as you will go."

But suddenly a person blocking Kurumi's path appeared.

Waking up from her happiness, contrary to her previous feelings, the feeling of the danger that appeared dominated her. And then, Kurumi looked at the girl that appeared in front of her eyes. The girl that stood there had a mismatching appearance to that alcohol stinking back-alley.

It was a big breasted maid with a broom in her hands whose breast size was so big it made one want to ask whether she was actually using fillings. Even Kurumi, who didn't have much interest in clothes, knew how high level the quality of the maid clothes the maid in front of her was using were.

“What?”

“Regarding the information which you obtained, I have something to talk with you.”

The big breasted maid was step by step closing in the distance between them. While she tightly held the letter, she started to step back. That information was one that, no matter what, she needed to report. Her little head started to work on thinking how to run away from that situation.

“No Mary, I want to talk to her myself.”

From behind the big breasted maid, there was a voice that had an intellectual feeling to it.

With the appearance of that other person, Kurumi unconsciously put her guard up. She readied herself so that she could immediately use the knife secretly hidden inside her sleeve at any time. At the worst possible occasion, she would need to directly confront them to open a path of escape. On her forehead, a single drop of sweat flowed down.

“B-but! Even though it is a young one, the opponent is a demon. It might be dangerous to young master.”

“It’s fine Mary. Because she is certainly a kind-hearted demon.”

Saying that, the one that was behind the big breasted maid finally appeared.

It was a child wearing very expensive clothes and with an elegant appearance. As she saw that, Kurumi ended up putting a perplexed face. She was certain that he would be a bit older, but he was actually a child even younger than her. His hands were so small that he would most likely not be able to even properly hold a sword. It started to feel stupid how Kurumi had her guard up before.

“Kind-hearted? Who are you talking about?”

“It’s obvious that it is about you, right? Because with your power, you could have already broke through us. But even so, you waited to hear us out. While you could have already attacked us, you instead want all to end peacefully. You... Your true thoughts actually are that you don’t want to hurt anybody.”

“Wha-?Th- There is no way it is like that!”

By that child’s nonsense talking, Kurumi blushed.

Without doubt, she was angry. Being said she was someone like that made Kurumi so embarrassed that she couldn’t stand. In denial to that child’s words, she took out her knife.

“I’m not kind-hearted or something like that!! Specially to you humans!!”

She then planned to cut through the child and deliver the information at once.

Aiming for the child and the maid, she dashed forward. But...

“Ehh?”

Right after the moment she had thought about it, her arm was seized by the child. Because of the sudden scene, Kurumi was taken by the surprise. She didn’t notice the movements of that child. It could only mean that the child was faster than her. Kurumi didn’t know what was happening. Right next to Kurumi’s ears, the child whispered.

To the point of being unimaginable for a child, it was a very kind and enchanting voice.

“You closed your eyes, you know? When you pointed that knife to us.”

“Such a thing...”

Being told something she didn’t even notice herself, Kurumi was dumbfounded. Even the knife that slipped off her hand went by unnoticed to her.

“I know the real you. If you don’t really want to hurt anybody, then this war itself... If it is me... No, if you and me cooperate, we can stop this war. That’s why I have something to ask you.”

The moment the sound of the knife falling down reverberated through the back-alley. Something inside Kurumi had changed.

Kurumi herself didn't notice, but now the bloodlust in her eyes from before wasn't there anymore. The blush in her cheeks changed into something that wasn't anger.

"I understand... But... I really need to report this information."

"Yes, I know. So, from the information there, I need you to only take a single word from it."

Near Kurumi's ear, the child whispered something. Looking at it in other way, it was like lovers whispering love words. One could only wonder what thoughts the maid had when seeing this scene. With her face red, the big breasted maid cleared her throat, interrupting.

"Young master, you are flirting with her too much."

"Ah, sorry Mary."

Like a wave going back to the sea after having been blown to the shore, he distanced himself from Kurumi.

Because of the fading warmth, Kurumi showed a bit solitary expression.

"I understand... I will do as you say. But... Before I go, tell me one thing. What is your name?"

Kurumi looked at the boy which was being now carried by the big breasted maid's arms.

Showing a smile comparable to an angel, he said with a very gentle voice.

"I am Rook Barusak. Nice to meet you, Kurumi-chan."

Being carried by the maid, he was brought out of the back-alley. While thinking back to those words said by Rook before, she also left the place. But now, the strength that was



put into holding the letter wasn't as much as the amount from a little ago.

“Quickly...I need to report this information.”

But this murmur wasn't regarding the matter of the Demon Lord army.

And at the back-alley nobody remained, the forgotten knife was giving off a solitary shine.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 6**

# IF ONLY IT WAS A DREAM

Many days had passed since Riku came to live in the garrison.

There were no problems regarding basic life necessities. Her life style improved in all the ways comparing to the time she was at Perikka city.

But this place still didn't feel like home to her.

She would always notice many gazes onto her when she would go to the dining hall.

While looking with a cold and disapproving gaze, they would come near one another and start a talk between only themselves. But there wasn't anyone that would talk to Riku. Of course, there was an exception. It was only Vrusto, who was tasked with taking care of her, that talked to her. But it seemed that it was all because of her position, since because she was his subordinate, Vrusto was ordered to let her be beside him.

Riku got used to Vrusto's strict training. She could bear the pain from the training without problems, but even so, she still couldn't get used to the looks of complete despise she would be given.

"Humans are very much hated..."

As she was moving the spoon with soup to her mouth, she casually muttered.

Vrusto, who was sitting next to Riku, seemingly having heard her murmurs, he let out a long sigh while he was playing with his knife.

"Well, that's obvious. Until now, they've been oppressing us demons. Besides, you are from that spiritualist family, right? It would be much stranger if they actually didn't hate you... By me, if it weren't for the captain's orders, I wouldn't be babysitting you."

"Babysitting...I'm already seven years old."

“Seven years old is just a brat. Don’t worry about it and just finish eating. After that, it will be training.”

“...Yes.”

Riku moved the spoon to her mouth once again.

Bit by bit, she was becoming able to land hits on Vrusto, but there still was the experience gap. Things weren’t going that well. Every time Riku would press forward for an attack, Vrusto would answer her with the double or triple of what her offensive would be. It would inevitably become a one-sided defensive battle that only if Vrusto was to get careless or if Riku was able to properly do a feint that she would be able to land a hit.

Leivein said that she had talent, but recently, Riku had been a bit uneasy about that. She would wonder whether she really did have talent.

“Your spoon stopped moving... Properly eat up. If you faint during the training, it will be only problems to me, you know? Or what? Do you hate this soup?”

“No...That’s not it...”

Riku used her spoon to touch the very thin chunk of meat in her soup.

At her time when she was still living at the Barusak household, she had never seen such a meat and vegetables only soup like that. There were a bit more vegetables in it and the meat pieces were a bit bigger. As she would take a bite of it, the meat juices would perfectly fit the soup and be very delicious.

She accepted that as long as she had something to eat, it was enough. But to the still seven years old Riku, this made her miss how her life used to be before.

“Then, what is it? Ah, that’s it. Are you bothered about the meat?”

Vrusto laughed.

The fangs, that were like they were looking at her, were shining. Riku kind of felt a chill.

“If you don’t want it, then give it to me. Meat is the thing we demons most love anyhow.”

Riku warily looked at the meat.

The thin piece of meat that was reflecting on the spoon.

“Demons...Most love...?”

The thing demons most love.

The thing demons most cherished.

In other words, it was something appreciated by demons and it was something to eat.

If one were to ask about a meat that they would boil, roast and eat, it would be...

“Ugh!!”

At this exact moment, deep in her throat, something sour was welling up.

The real identity of the meat came to her mind. Putting her hands onto her mouth, she tried to repress herself from crying. If that was the thing demons liked the most, then this would be none other than a certain something. Since she had come here, from all these days, there wasn’t one day she didn’t eat meat. This meant that all this time, she had been eating...

“He-hey, don’t be so startled like that! This is only pork meat. The part more to the interior of the training place there is a pig farm, you know.”

“Eh, pig?”

“Yes, pig. If you are so much bothered by that, what about going there to take a look

before training?”

Vrusto was showing a shocked expression. Absentminded, Riku opened her mouth. The nausea slowly settled out. She was certain she ended up eating someone of her same race and was falling into self-hatred, but fortunately for her, it seemed this wasn't the case. Finally at ease, she ate the meat.

“You are too biased about demons. We hate humans, but we don't just go eat them, you know?...Actually...Brat, have you ever eaten a demon?”

“...No.”

“Right? That's the same case. There is no way for us to go eat either demons or humans.”

As she was drinking her soup with her spoon, she started to think about all he said.

On text books and picture books, it was written that demons ate humans. Many times, she had read this on them and her father would tell her that as well.

But the reality was different. Riku also thought about the possibility of Vrusto lying, but thinking about his behavior, it didn't look like he was doing so.

Then, would that mean both her father and the textbooks were lying?

She didn't want to doubt her father, and also didn't want to think he was lying. Riku felt like she didn't know anything anymore. She was opening her mouth, about to ask a question to Vrusto, but right at that moment, a sharp voice sounded through the dining hall.

“Hear it out!!”

The door was widely left open.

Because of the angle of the light, she wasn't able to see the person well, but there was a small shadow and a big shadow made by the people standing there. She wasn't able to see their faces, but by the voice, she knew who it was. As she was about to look at the owner

of the voice, she felt an impact on the back of her head.

“Stupid! Lower down your head already!”

Vrusto forcibly pressed her head down.

Looking with the edge of her eyes, she noticed all the demons gathered in the dining hall were bowing down to those shadows. All the demons that were forged into having good physiques all at once bowed their head to the small shadow. Although the shadow was small, the presence given by it was by far much greater than the big shadow behind.

The small shadow... Leivein, with a step, entered the dining hall. Then, Leivein opened his mouth.

“Everybody lift up your heads. We are moving out.”

---

The Shiidoru kingdom at its best splendor.

With the outstanding power of the four spiritualist families, they were able to quickly uproot the sprout of evil called demons before it grew.

Everybody showing a smile and nobody suffering from unhappiness. The marvelous kingdom as a flower in its full blossom, and its sole flaw could be said to be the clock bomb the demon lord that have been sealed there was.

In this Shiidoru kingdom, every year once, there was a event done as a custom.

It was called the [Demon cleaning campaign].

The absolutely wicked demons; its remaints would affect the peace by their certain questionable actions. Many villages and cities would be invaded, things would be set on fire and food would be stolen. For men, they would be used as slaves, for women, they

would be raped, and for children, they would be thrown into their soup and ultimately end up killed. At the time when the fires of war spread, the spiritualists employed by the royalty would specifically advance to their bases and all at once launch an attack.

And then, they would dignifiedly come back to the capital victorious.

...Carrying many demon heads.

Riku has seen this parade before.

In its center, she would see her father. Standing in a carriage covered in flowers, the figure of him majestically waving his hands to the public was something she aspired for. She could only wonder how many necks the halberd in his hand had cut. It was haughty just to imagine. It was something that really soothed her heart. She decided to become an renowned spiritualist just like how her father was.

That vow she made herself... She would always remember it well; it was a very bright memory.

It was supposed to be a good memory.

“Could it be that... All that were only schemes of the kingdom?”

Riku muttered surprised.

The place the Dragon Demon Garrison are sending five hundred soldiers is already expected to fall by the attacks of the spiritualists. Without the spiritualists knowing, they were to secretly get to that village. And so, the Dragon Demon Battalion separated itself, each part consisting of about a hundred soldiers, and were marching through the forest.

“In the back-story of a heroic tale, there are a lot of dirty stuff.”

As Vrusto was carrying his weapon, he bluntly said.

With a sidelong glance, looking at Riku, whose mood was sinking, he kept talking.



“This time we are lucky, you know? We got to get that village that is being invaded now the priority to them.”(Tl note: It is not stated why that specific village getting the priority being a good thing...)

“But isn’t better to just evacuate everyone instead? In case they attack, then... just make it look like the village had been abandoned...”

“Stupid. If you do that, they will just look for another village to attack. To get the least amount of casualties, it is better for us, who are experienced in combat, to fight and give time for the villagers to run away. What? When the captain sees a good opportunity, he will immediately send the order to retreat. The thing those guys really want is only prestige. They only want to get a proper demon head to say that it was the one of a general to their people and want to show off with the reality that they destroyed a village, even if it just a shabby and negligible one.”

Riku looked downwards.

Looking down at her black shadow and keeping her heavy legs from stopping.

That what she had always believed was proved to be all lies... It was as if she was inside a bad dream.

Ever since she was driven away from the Barusak household, maybe she was lost within a dream. While thinking that, she fixed the posture she was carrying her halberd.

“Humans are very much hated, right?”

“How many times have you already said that??”

With Vrusto’s howl, Riku’s feelings

Now she was going to fight a war, but even though it was the battlefield she so much yearned for, she didn’t feel excited about that.

It was all only a profound melancholy. Seeing Riku like that, he started scratching his

cheek with his pointed nail.

“Brat, don’t die.”

“...Yes.”

“Ah, what is it. If you die, all the time I had to spend on you would be wasted. It would be a waste, right? And then, people would think it was because I didn’t instruct you well. If it affects my career, then what am I supposed to do? If possible, then you should even go get some achievements.”

“...Yes.”

“Get a grip on yourself!”

Vrusto firmly slapped Riku’s back.

Because of how much strength it was put on the slap, Riku was sent a bit forward, seeming to be almost falling down, but she was able to hold her feet. Because of that, she sent a protesting gaze to Vrusto.

“I, I know that! I don’t want to die yet... But... Is the source of the information even reliable? It could be a false alarm, right?”

“Apparently, it is reliable. I’ve heard it was an information a demon infiltrated in the capital got hold of after great pains. Well, I don’t really know the details.”

“Hey, Vrusto! Come here for a sec!”

Coming from the front, a demon that was shaking hands with Vrusto. It was a demon that a these days was often having conversations with both seemingly being friendly to each other. Riku thought that one from before should be his friend.

And to confirm her thoughts, Vrusto was showing a broad smile.

“Brat, you keep marching there, alright? What is it, Seiji? Oh, Frank was there too.”

Leaving Riku alone, looking like he was having fun, he started to run and went more to the front.

Getting next to the demons he called Seiji and Frank, they started to talk, looking like very intimate friends. Riku wasn't able to hear what they were talking about.

Going with the flow of her surroundings, she kept the march.

Now that Vrusto was gone, there wasn't anyone she could talk to. If Leivein was nearby, maybe she could go next to him. But he was commanding another squad, so he wasn't around. And even if she were to go next to him, Leivein was still the captain of the Dragon Demon Division. There was no way a recently recruited soldier would be able to so casually do so.

“It would be nice if all that was only a dream.”

She knew she couldn't be all the time thinking back about the life she used to have. She understood she was thrown away by her father. But...

“Hey, are we going to kill that human brat?”

“Not really.”

“She smells like human anyway, so it can't be helped if I mistake her with the enemy.”

“Are you killing her during all the turmoil?”

“You should give up on that. Right now the captain isn't here, but if he finds out later, he will get really mad.”

“What was the captain even thinking back then?”

With the cold glares together with all the talks she would here, the feeling she shouldn't be

living there only became even clearer.

The doubt she had of whether it was fine if she kept living together with the demons only increased.

She running away as a deserter during the turmoil of the war could be a possibility.

But, before she would even consider running away, at the moment, there was not even a way for her to be assured she would have food to keep living on. Riku gave a very deep sigh.

“Fire the exorcising arrows!!”

From the trees left and right, an arrow shower rained down.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 7**

# THE ASSAULT

The arrows were approaching.

And it wasn't only one or two arrows.

Suddenly, an amount of arrows so great that becomes impossible to count poured down like rain.

The demons that were before marching, for the ones that carried one, each lifted their own shields. Fortunately, although there were still a great number of arrows, they were thinner than twigs. If it was those thin arrows, there would be no way they could go through the iron shields. The metallic sounds kept resounding indefinitely. But for the demons that were one second late to ready their shields, the arrow shower was like hell. Without being able to defend themselves, they would have the arrows piercing their throats and their arms.\*1

Riku, who wasn't carrying a shield, could only repel the incoming arrows with her halberd as much as she could. But even then, there was no way she could repel all of the arrows. One arrow grazed on Riku's cheek. She felt the same pain as the one for cutting your finger with paper. With the back of her hand, she wiped her cheek.

"Stupid demons! For them to get fooled by false information!"

From up on a tree, a laughing voice was possible to hear.

Looking upwards to the voice, on a tree branch, there was a shadow covered with a black mantle. Together with him, there were roughly about a bit more than a hundred people. Holding his mantle together, there was a brooch with the image that looked like one of a snake inscribed on it.\*2 Right as she saw the pattern, she sighed.

"It's the family crest of the spiritualist family Bernaal."

Just like the Barusak household, it was one of the spiritualist families that served the king.

As a fellow spiritualist family, they would together participate in this ritualistic war.\*3 She had heard some times that they were one of the spiritualist families that would just for the sake of prolonging the peace of the kingdom, fight the demons. At least, as far as her father had taught her, they weren't a family that would do something coward like a night surprise attack.

Disregarding Riku, who was dumbfounded and tightly grasping her halberd, the situation still progressed.

“Shit! It was a trap?!”

“To think they concealed their smells and got close to us... Damn it. Everyone, attack!”

The demons wouldn't only stand, keep being shot by the arrows.

The demons that had good physical constitution, all at once, were charging and striking against the trees.

As a demon enveloped by a carapace and another that looked like a bear stroke against the trees, the ground shook. Some spiritualist that had lost their balance fell down to the ground. But actually, there were also some spiritualists that went down the trees themselves before being thrown out of their balance. Each wielding a spiritualist blade, swinging it down towards the demons closer to the trees. The demons that were bellow the trees, just like a cutting a fruit, were cut into two halves.\*4

“Tch, everyone charge!! Even if it is with your last efforts, kill them!”

“That's my line. For the sake of the kingdom, kill all the demons!!”\*5

The demon banning arts she so much had trained and the combat techniques of the demons she have been training as well; now both were confronting each other.

But the situation of the battle now was that the spiritualist side were having an overwhelming advantage. In terms of numbers, they were even. But the spiritualists were specialists in exterminating demons.\*6 No matter how much the demons would temper their own bodies, they were like babies when facing the swords infused with demon

banning power. After all, even the one with a carapace as hard as armor was easily cut. For each spiritualist killed, five or six demons would lose their heads.

“Shit. Fight until your last breath!! ”

The demon that was commanding the army had his voice interrupted.

A spiritualist that was carrying a spear thrust it through his back. Without any ceremonies, he easily died just like that. Even though the demon's numbers were a considerable power enough to be called an small army, in front of the spiritualists, they were like powerless peons.

“Die! You demons don't deserve to live anywhere in this world.”

The spiritualist, with a loud voice, declared.

Yes, in all those hundred or years... The reason why demons weren't even considered to be an enemy to humans was that.

And this time too, even before starting to fight, the winner had already been decided.

...Or so was supposed to be the case.

“Too fast. Demons die so easily...”

Out-of-place for a war, Riku's voice resounded through the battlefield.

And as if following the intent of those words, screams from spiritualists started echoing around.\*7

From how sudden the screams were, many spiritualists stopped moving. The demons that before were fighting a one-way defensive war, surprised, stopped their hands too. And then, by the time the spiritualists stopped moving, their good-fortune ended there.

“You guys too, shouldn't you just go die already?”



Riku swung her halberd.

The sharply polished lump of iron as if it was very much unexpected flew towards a spiritualist. Cutting his torso and sending it flying, the body fell while exposing his internal organs. But before it fell to the ground, another spiritualist that was still looking at his friend that suddenly died just now had his head cut off. The fresh blood was spraying to the surroundings. Some of this blood stuck to the face of one of the spiritualist, who seemed to be their captain. That spiritualist slowly moved his hand to touch his cheek. In his finger, there was now blood sticking to it. Only then he came to himself. It was an expression of surprise at first, but soon he started to twist his face. The emotion there was of anger. The spiritualist, with his eyes bloodshot, looked at the blood soaked Riku.

“You damned demon lass.”

As he raised his voice, he readied his sword stance.

Riku, with a expressionless face, was rotating her halberd. With very cold eyes, she looked at the spiritualist. Then, slowly she walked toward that sword wielding spiritualist. From her behavior, it looked as if she wasn't even ready for fighting. She was only lazily rotating her halberd with her right hand. Looking at how Riku was acting, veins in his head popped out because of anger.<sup>8\*</sup>

“You will only be able to act arrogant for now. I will kill you with my own hands!”

The spiritualist vigorously raised his sword overhead.

Riku, raised her face to follow the sword, as if doing so was a pain in the ass. Even now that the overpowering demon banning sword was swung down, it didn't seem like she was thinking about evading the attack. Instead, as if to catch the sword that was being swung down, Riku put her hand forward. The sword, together with the sound of the wind being cut, fell down towards Riku's hand. The impact of the sword being swung down made Riku frown a bit.

But that was all. It was supposed to be a strong attack, but Riku was left unharmed. Until now, it was the same sword that were easily cutting down demons, but in Riku's palm, there weren't any wounds.

The spiritualist expression turned from anger to surprise. While shouting, he put his demon banning power into his sword. But even so, Riku was left unfazed. No matter how much power he would put into the sword, Riku wouldn't bleed.

“Wh-why!?”

“While there is demon banning power into it, in its normal state, it is nothing more than a simple and blunt harmless sword.”

The spiritualist was shocked.

Rather than anger, the surprise and fear of the unknown dominated. Through all of his body, he was sweating. He was now fearful of the little Riku more than anything else.\*9

On the other way, Riku was showing an expression that was the opposite of the spiritualist's. She was showing one vaguely tranquil and a lonely smile. But, in her eyes resided madness. Looking up at the surprised spiritualist, Riku indifferently spoke to him.

“Even if you can cut demons, you can't cut me.”\*10

Holding his sword with her left hand and tightly holding her halberd with her right hand, still with a calm expression...

“Goodbye, spiritualist of Bernaal.”

And the spiritualist, unable to put resistance, was vertically cut in half.\*11

A deep red color similar to her hair painted Riku's skin. Without showing any signs that she cared about that, she turned her eyes to the remaining spiritualists.

“Good afternoon, Bernaal spiritualists. Have you prepared yourselves to hand over your heads?”

While holding her blood covered halberd in her hand, she walked over the now cut into two spiritualist.

It was like Othello. The board which the white pieces were in predominance, with only a single black piece, the the situation was reversed.

As the red halberd danced, heads with its faces twisted in fear would fly around. To the spiritualists, it would be like the image of hell itself. Even so, there were spiritualists that were still somewhat right in mind. One spiritualist, while trembling so much his demon banning sword was shaking, shouted with all his strength.

“It-It’s only one person! If we can kill that, it will be our win!!”

“If you can kill that? That may be a little wrong.”

The spiritualist trembling arm was cut off and fell to the ground. As he saw his arm there on the ground, any remaining sanity was blown away. Raising a scream that wouldn’t become words, he took one step back. Because of how in panic he was as he did so, he ended up falling down backside. Even so, he did his all to run away. He retreated as he was being dyed in red by the blood on the ground.

But right as that spiritualist was about to pull back, a sharp spear pierced through his chest.

“Sorry, but I can’t just let that brat just go and reap all the achievements, can I?”

It was Vrusto’s spear that had pierced through the spiritualist.

As if that was a signal, all the demons that were still alive went to attack the remaining spiritualists. Among them, there were not even one person still willing to fight. To Riku’s eyes, the spiritualists that had lost their fighting spirit weren’t a threat to the demons that had seen a chance of winning.

“It’s not enough.”\*12

Riku was looking at the surroundings from afar, seeing the demons swarming the spiritualists.

Without averting her eyes from the tragedy that was happening to them and without even blinking; only holding her halberd in her arms as she was looking at it.

“Alright, quickly someone tell captain Leivein about the trap!”

“Reorganize the rankings, we are pulling back!!”

As the last spiritualist stopped moving, the remaining demon were taking the commands given.

Within the sea of blood, everyone happy about their victory and talking to one another about each of their struggles. Among those, one demon left from the group of demons that were talking. As if he remembered something, that demon approached Riku. It was not possible to see through the expression that was on the face of the demon...Of Vrusto.

From his hairy wolf face, looked like it was angry, but at the same time, it looked as if he was laughing. Since there was nothing to say about that, Riku saluted to him while still grasping her halberd.

Silently, Vrusto looked at Riku for a moment. And then lifting up his hand with sharp nails...

“You did well!”

And with all his strength, he slapped her back.

Because of the strength put into it, she staggered. Because of such sudden attack, Riku was about to voice her complaints, but before she could open her mouth, Vrusto started talking.

“You, I thought since you were only a little brat you would die in your first battle. This is evidence that my training methods are very good.”

Because of such a weird reason, Vrusto’s tone of voice seemed very happy.

Whether because of how he was bragging about his skills as an instructor or something

else.

Riku didn't understand very well, but thinking about that was troublesome now. She wasn't really interested in the reason why Vrusto was happy. While rubbing her pained back, she looked at Vrusto.

"But, you are really covered in blood, huh. When we come back, you need to properly wash the blood that is covering your armor. You are still a girl after all, one way or another."13\*

Only saying that, Vrusto turned away from Riku.

He went back to the group of surviving demons. In the end, she didn't really know what all that was about as a question mark floated above her head. For now, she thought she should be wiping the blood that was covering her halberd with her handkerchief. With that, she took out the handkerchief that was in her pocket. But even the handkerchief that was supposed to be white was covered in blood.

"Hey, brat. By the way, I have something I want to ask."

As she was wiping her halberd with the blood covered handkerchief, Vrusto turned back to her.

"You were supposed to be of one of those spiritualist families, right? Is it really alright for you to have killed them just like that with no hesitation?"

"Was there a problem in doing so?"

Riku tilted her little head.

Each time she moved the handkerchief, the blood stains would stretch onto the silvery blade. She was able to remove the fragments of organs and most of the blood. But if she were to wipe more than that, it would make the halberd even dirtier rather than cleaning it. As she was folding her handkerchief, she said.

"That was the enemy, right? If they are that, then they are people that need to be killed, right?"

“But a few weeks before, they were you allies, weren’t they?”

“Allies?”

To Vrusto’s question, Riku raised the corners of her mouth.

With her red hair fluttering with the wind, her lips dyed in blood formed a smile.

“Those people wouldn’t accept me. That’s why they weren’t my allies. Besides...”

Deep in Riku’s eyelids, radiant blue eyes were reflected onto them.

For the first time since she had been born somebody expected something out of her.

Leivein had accepted Riku’s power. And to her, that didn’t have anywhere to go, he gave her a place to belong to.

...Even the red hair she didn’t like that much he told her that it looked nice on her.

The one to first accept her existence was Leivein. The one to first consider her necessary was him too. That’s why she would swing her halberd for his sake.

For the sake of the Dragon Demon Battalion he gave to her...

“It’s because here is the place I belong to.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 8**

# THE REUNION AT FULL MOON

Demon capital Taitas.

In this hidden village of which it was the best among them, many demons crowded. For the demon race, it could be said that it was considered a place similar to a capital. If one were to ignore the fact that it was covered by a thick white colored mist all the time, it could be said to be a nice place to live.\*1

But, to the living demons, the mist wasn't something that exactly limited their senses, nor was really a hindrance. Even if the line of sight became limited, this mist had been always protecting the demon race for two hundred years. The mist was like a good neighbor that the demons had always relied on; a very important existence that protected them.

At this night, the rare occurrence of the mist clearing up happened.

Up in the indigo sky full of twinkling stars was a golden colored full moon. While the streets were filled with demons dressed up for the moon viewing party, inside the demon lord castle, which soared high at the center of the demon capital Taitas, there weren't even a single demon excited for it. Rather, without caring about how the night was such that the moon was shining so brightly, there wasn't anyone looking outside.

The reason for that was simple.

It was because an important reunion that involved the fate of the Demon Lord Army was about to happen.

Within the reunion that was happening at the demon lord castle, there were an array of very famous demons.

Demons that had magnificent wings, demons that were sharpening its claws, demons that had horns to be proud of, all demons were looking at a person kneeling at the center of the room. The one kneeling there was Leivein, dressed in his uniform. He still wasn't an adult, but he had already been distinguishing himself from others, even more than his father. Because he was known to be the "within ten years guaranteed to enter the top brass demon youth" that this incident gathered interest from many demons.



“Leivein Adlar! What in the world were you thinking for you to recruit a human into the Demon Lord army!?”<sup>2\*</sup>

The one to start the debate was a very muscular horned demon.

While touching his mustache that couldn't be more well embellished than that, he kept staring at Leivein, who still wasn't in position to say anything. Although Leivein had been asked a question, he remained silent. Moreover, he didn't even look at the demon that asked the question. He only kept looking down at the polished marble of the floor while remaining on one knee.\*<sup>3</sup>

“Youngsters aren't supposed to do whatever wishes you have. Immediately go kill the human. Otherwise, you will be banished from the Demon Lord army.

“Besides, isn't the human in question of one of those hateful spiritualist families?”

The demon had barely finished what he had to say, but the other demons that had their arms crossed started questioning him too.

It was possible to notice their anger by looking into their eyes, which burned fires of anger, although it contrary to that their faces, which seemed very calm at a first glance. If that was the battlefield, the amount of bloodlust was so much that it felt they would immediately attack with their prided fangs, biting Leivein to death.

The mustache demon seemed happy for getting agreed to. Looking so very much happy for a reason like that, he patted the shoulder of another demon.

“Oh, lieutenant general Zerrik, are your thoughts the same as mine?”

“Indeed. It is as lieutenant general Gortoberuk says. Even if something like a human is added to our forces, it will only be a nuisance.”

Zerrik provokingly muttered.

Edgar Zerrik's parents, and even his grandfather and his son, all were killed mercilessly

by spiritualists. And for his son's case, not only was he captured, he was dragged around until they got to a city. And then, his head that was decapitated just for a little while later to get thrown away in the river. That is why it couldn't be helped that he hated humans more than it was necessary to. About that, everyone gathered here knew it.

"Say something, lieutenant commander Adlar!!"

"Very well, lieutenant general Gortoberuk. Then, I would like to ask something to lieutenant general Zerrik."

As he was looking at the floor, Leivein calmly said.

At one glance, it was impossible to read anything from his expression. But there was one person there that knew him too well... It was the one behind Gortoberuk and Zerrik; Leivein's father, who was now feeling ashamed of Leivein's actions. He knew that Leivein was in fact starting to get angry.

"This last battle, who was the one that had the most achievements?"

"Indeed, it was the human."

Zerrik was making a face that seemed like he would jump at Leivein at any moment.

In the last battle, a surprise attack from the spiritualist side was unexpected.

Regarding the information that was secretly obtained, until a group of spiritualists could get to the targeted village, it was estimated that it would take at least a few days. And considering that, in order for the emergency evacuation to happen smoothly, Leivein's army was dispatched.

But in fact, the village in question being attacked was actually a false information, and the spiritualists were planning to completely eliminate the demon forces that were hurrying to the village.

From the words of a captured spiritualist, their objective was using the battle as an real-life experiment to verify the effectiveness of the special mantle that concealed human smell.

And by the developed mantle shown effectiveness, it was proved that its usage for surprise attacks was an success.

If the newly recruited human... Riku Barusak wasn't there, the forward squad would be decimated, and the other squads behind would keep marching without knowing anything, thus decimated as well. The whole Dragon Demon Battalion would be annihilated.

"Wasn't it confirmed on the information that within the Bernaal family, that mantle had lost credibility?"\*4

"Yes, but!"

"And more than making them lose credibility on the mantle, didn't their morale also fall down to the ground?"

"B-but! Have you not considered that this human that was thrown away by the Barusak family might have hidden intentions?"

Next to him, Gortoberuk nodded. While stroking his prided mustache, agreeing to Zerrik's statements, he started speaking.

"She could have purposely cut some of her spiritualist fellows, and licking our boots so that she could show herself as somebody useful. She wouldn't only get data from our newest weapons, but also would even gain our trust. It would be this much advantageous of a strategy to the spiritualists."

"Hidden intentions? Licking our boots?"

At that time, for the first time Leivein lost his composure enough so that people could know his feelings by his expression.

He was still looking at the floor, but as if sneering at his superiors, who were many times older than him, the corners of his mouth rose into a smile.

"Your point has value, but let me only say one thing. That thing will definitely not betray

us.”

“Leivein Adlar! On what basis are you saying such a thing!? Certainly something like trusting with nothing to support it or so is simply foolish and should be left out of arguments, should it not?”

“If you want me to prove my point, then I can do so.”

His smile was unchanged.

The smile he was showing was one fearless and arrogant.

Perhaps, if Leivein had a bigger stature, and if he was permitted to lift his head, then he would end up looking down on them. Gortoberuk, noticing such smile, got angry. As if trying to get closer to him, he did one step forward.

“Then, tell us right now! It is an order from your superior!”

“What, this is a incredibly easy thing to do. I merely got hold of the name of that thing. The moment it tries to betray us, binding its soul would be a simple thing to do.”

As if Gortoberuk had his breathing cut off, he twisted his bearded face.

The concept of the worth of having one’s true name was also widely known by the demons. Whether it was a human or a demon, the moment you are born in this world, you are given a [name]. If you have knowledge of this name, you can manipulate the person whose name you got. Of course, even outside that person’s will, you can command the person to suicide.

“Lieutenant general, don’t worry. If in one out of thousand of a chance that such a thing happens, I can easily make it suicide. You should know how the strength of having someone’s true name is absolute, correct?”

“G-gh.”( ぐ、ぐぬう )

Gortoberuk knew the terror of the power of the concept of one’s true name too well.

Even if you have something to say against, you become unable to say anything. No matter how much you would try to think about a way to resist, you would just become unable to even think. As if to say “such useless guy”, Zerrik gave Gortoberuk, who became unable to say anything, a glance. And then, in place of Gortoberuk, he spoke.

“You say that, lieutenant commander, but you still could say that it is to consider the possibility of the name you got being false.”

“That’s impossible. Losing its pride as a spiritualist and reduced to be starving to death; some little girl rotting in some back-alley waiting for death that wasn’t even aware of how society works. There was no way it would tell lies.”

As if clarifying any doubts by cutting it in two, Leivein declared.

As long as it had something to eat, whether it was human or demon, both could keep living. But even with nothing to eat, as long as one had pride and faith, one could keep on fighting. But if those two were also broke, then one wouldn’t be able to do anything. Unless one could find hope once again, death was the only road.

Zerrik knew this much.

But it was still possible that the human was still hiding its pride as a spiritualist. Immediately following that, as to point this out, he was about to open his mouth.

“Lieutenant commander Leivein Adlar.”

A clear and noticeably young voice resounded through the audience.

Everyone simultaneously looked at the owner of the voice. Leivein too, thus finally lifting up his head.

The owner of the voice was a young girl. She was wearing simple toned black clothes and had a blonde hair of similar color to the rice plant at autumn, having it tied into a twin-tails. Somewhat above her ears, there were two magnificent horns. This very young girl that was cute in every point was seated in the enshrined throne with her legs crossed; a throne that was located in a place higher than where the people discussing at the reunion

where at.

The name of the girl was Charlotte. In the outward appearance, she seemed to be a young girl, but in fact she was the younger sister of the demon lord, who was sealed away two hundred years ago, and now was commanding the demon race. In other words...

“Ha, Charlotte-sama”\*5(はっ)

He hid away his arrogant face and changed it back to his usual face. But this time it was different from the unreadable face from not long ago. It was a very serious and honest face that made his loyalty to the Demon Lord army known.

To such Leivein, Charlotte only silently looked at him.

“The words I want to say... You actually already know it, right?”

“...Would it be regarding the sealing of Demon Lord-sama?”

“If you know this much, you should already know well enough what to do. As it happens, after ten years, we will be prepared to dispel the seal; it will be a very important moment. Will that Barusak descendant you picked up be useful at that time?”

In a mood of high tension comparable to having your whole body pricked by needles, the audience got nervous.

It was an ambiance that not only made Gortoberuk or Zerrik, but also was like that to the point of making the common soldiers that were only listening very tense. It had already become a situation that no intrusions would be permitted.

“Then, what is it that you are going to do... Leivein Adlar?”

“There will be no problems regarding that.”\*6

In that mood that seemed something could explode at any moment, Leivein nonchalantly answered the question together with a smile.

“Not only it acts like pet dog, I’ve also been rigorously disciplining it. If even then she still bites, there will be no need for worries as I will just dispose of her like a street dog.”\*7

From the window, a pale light from the full moon was flowing in.

Charlotte then nodded at Leivein’s words, which were all spoken with no hesitations.

“If that is the case, then I will leave it to you to take care of the dog. In these ten years, train her well.”

With those few words, Riku Barusak’s fate was decided.

To keep raising her. If she acts wrong, then punishment. This was the decision Charlotte took, and nobody was allowed to go against it. The actual situation which the Demon Lord wasn’t present, Charlotte’s decisions were like the decisions of the Demon Lord army itself.

Gortoberuk and Zerrik, and the many other demons too all lowered their heads as to show respect.

“”As you command!”” \*8

This was what happened in this rare night which the moonlight passed through the mist.\*9

Looking forward to unseal the Demon Lord after these ten years, the demon lord army bit by bit started to act.

For the spiritualist side that was already aware about it, it was only something negligible.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 9**



# TEN YEARS LATER...

Ten years had passed.

The port city Perikka as always was stinking of alcohol.

The foreign merchants would spend their money they got hold of by doing wicked things, and the pirates would throw out a feast for themselves using the gold and silver treasures they had stolen. And all those kind of vulgar guys would dive themselves into the pleasure quarters looking to please themselves.

Sometimes, a demon merchant would come asking for a place to sell goods in exchange for money, but the merchant's association of Perikka would only turn a deaf ear to such requests.

There was no forgiveness for demons, that were lower than domestic animals, or poor people.

As long as you had the money, it was a city of elegance that was always wrapped in a mood of cheerfulness.

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Today too there was another wealthy merchant getting himself drunk.

Finishing his meal at a first-class restaurant, he got on his personal carriage and went his way home.

This carriage was pulled by two elegant horses of fine quality and with a wide and comfortable space inside. After the wealthy merchant and his butler, and also his escort got in, they departed. Happy, the merchant showed a complacent smile.

"Fufufufu, because of the stupid nobles that didn't know the market price, I got big profit. To think that a pot costing a hundred silver coins was sold for a thousand. Such a large

profit.”

“Indeed, it is as you say, master.”

With a faint smile, the butler proudly poured the drink in his master’s golden wine cup.

The purely made of gold cup was a product of good quality he had received as payment from pirates he had connections to. If he were to sell this, he would get enough gold coins to build a small castle. In reality, it was a piece he wouldn’t be able to get by only working as a merchant.

“Good grief. It was good that stupid elder brother turned down the family heritage.”

The merchant faintly smiled.

His elder brother had talent for sword fighting. And so, for the sake of his dream to come true or something like that, he departed towards the royal capital. And since then, never came back home. Deep in his heart, he thanked god for his elder brother to be this stupid.

If his brother were to receive the heritage, without doubt he wouldn’t be able to live in this much extravagance. He only wished that once his elder brother came back screwed up, he wouldn’t tell him to hand over the heritage.

“Truly, tonight is a good night.”

The merchant moved his cup back and forth.

The wine inside the cup was elegantly shaking according to his movement. It was a wine of many times more worth than the one he drank at the restaurant he had eaten. In the Perikka city, the merchants that could actually drink something like that were only very few people.

With all that, this merchant was taken by a happiness that had no comparison.

But...

“Hm?”

The carriage stopped.

It still wasn't supposed to be time for him to arrive to his residence. He wondered if it was an drunk pirate or some vagabond that was sleeping in the middle of the road. For something like that, just avoiding and keep going would be enough, but there were no signs of the carriage starting to move again.

“Go see the situation.”

Even though the merchant was in a good mood before, it was completely dampened. While gulping down drink from the cup, he annoyingly commanded the butler. There was nothing his butler couldn't deal with. And in the minimal chance of something wrong happening, he had a veteran soldier that went through war as his escorts, and then as usual, he could just settle everything with force.

Right now, the escort prepared himself so he would be able to draw his sword at any moment.

Answering to his master, the butler responded.

“Understood.”

Bowing his head, he rapidly got down from the carriage... And then, his head was cut off.

“Huh?”

Because of the sudden event, he got his mouth wide-opened.

The escort guarding the merchant, because of the surprise, in an instant readied himself.

Without noticing it, the merchant dropped his golden cup; that one which could buy one castle by itself.

The butler's head, as it was spraying blood around, was rolling in the ground. The merchant could only keep blankly staring at the head.

“Ara, is there someone left?”

The girl's voice entered into the merchant's ear at that instant.

And in that instant, he came back to himself.

“Hi,hiii!”( ひ、ひいい ! )

The merchant went for the other carriage door, leaving the carriage almost fell down by himself.

He didn't know what happened, but now his butler was dead. In front of his eyes, his head was cut off.

The merchant, now sobered up completely, once he stumbled out of the carriage, he lost his breath. On the ground around, it was a sea of blood. The horses that were pulling the carriage and the coachman were now sinking in the sea of blood. Sinking with their head and torso separated.

“W-what is that? What the hell is that!!?”

“What it is, you say. Isn't it obvious they are only dead bodies?”

Once again, the high-pitched voice sounded through the road.

As to protect the merchant, the escort went in front of him.

Hiding behind the shadows of the escort, he secretly tried to confirm the owner of the voice. And then his muscles froze.

It was a young girl walking through the sea of blood, splashing it with each step.

The girl was completely painted in red. Red hair that seemed to burn, a red armor that was shaped perfectly to her slim body and a face covered in blood. The girl's eyes were black like a swamp with no bottom.

At the moment the blood covered halberd dimly shone, the merchant shouted.

“Q-quickly kill that thing!! If you do, I double your wage!!”

As if agreeing to those words, the escort drew his sword.

But the merchant didn't notice. He didn't notice that his proficient escorts which would fear nothing were dripping with sweat from their forehead.\*1

He didn't notice how the sword that was always held in only one hand, was now being held with two hands.

And because he didn't notice such thing, just like usual, or rather, more than usual, he raised his voice to send an order.

“You are supposed to be a veteran of a hundred battles, right!? Kill that thing that looks like a little girl already!! Cut her head off and tear her into pieces!!”

The escort vigorously kicked the ground and rushed forward.

Aiming at the girl that had only about half his stature, he swung his prized sword down.

And so the fragile girl would be soon enough split in half.

...But what was expected to happen didn't.

Using the hook of the halberd, the girl took the sword away from his hands.

In contrast to the escort's shocked face and full of sweat, her face was as calm as it could be. Even though the escort had put his body weight in his blow, the halberd was left unfazed, not even quivering the slightest.

And looking bored, the girl sighed.

“Yes, end of the battle.”

And then, the girl declared his execution.

The massive halberd was with only one hand easily maneuvered.

The escort didn't even have time to run away. Stumbling by the force of having his sword taken, the escort was now only a worthless existence. Like cutting a fruit, the halberd perfectly cut the escort in two halves.

“Su-such a thing, impossible...”

Seeing his escort sinking down in the sea of blood, the merchant stepped back.

The escort was supposed to have about two times more physical strength. If it was about age, he should have been about twice as much old as her. This soldier that had a long military service; such soldier was easily killed.\*2

The merchant looked around his surroundings.

But around that alley, there was nobody.

No, even if there was anyone, the person wouldn't have enough power to oppose the girl. The only way for a miracle to happen would be to somehow get to the main street ahead of here and ask for help.

But while looking at him the girl was closing in to the merchant.

No matter how, there was any openings for him to run away. Lightly rotating her halberd,

she slowly approached the merchant.

“Next will be your turn... Hm? Your face... I have the feeling I have seen your face before. When was it?”

While being troubled by it, the girl was looking up at the sky.

A miracle had happened for the merchant.

The moment she left her eyes from him, he started running.

That girl was insane.

She was definitely insane, or so the merchant decided. He needed to quickly run away to somewhere. And then ask for help.

Besides, the girl's weapon was a halberd. That heavy looking axe shaped blade stuck to a spear, for a skinny girl like her, it was definitely something impossible to be waving around. Only to raise it overhead it would take time. Even if she was to follow him, he should be able to escape.

In that city, for that skinny looking girl, there were a mountain of bold pirates to deal with her.

“Well, never mind.”

It seemed that the girl didn't recognize the merchant.

Cutting through the wind, she swung her halberd.

The merchant's head flew and it fell into the sea of blood. And just like that she had raised the death count by one. The girl grabbed the merchant's head by his short hair.

“For now, let's take it home. It's only to be sure after all.”

The girl, covered in blood, was happily smiling.

Carrying the merchant's head just like that, she pompously left the alley. Getting to the main street, even though the girl was covered in blood, nobody paid any heed to that. Nobody started screaming or so. The street that was so beautiful it was only next to the one in the capital until a few hours ago was now sinking in a sea of blood. And there were no humans screaming anywhere.

The demons that the girl had brought with her were now stabbing any human that showed even little signs of breathing.

Among these demons, one turned his attention to the girl. While holding a human he had pierced through with his spear, he rudely spoke.

“Hey, brat! Don't just be standing around and finish your mission already.”

“I know warrant officer Vrusto. By the way, was this guy in the list?”

The girl showed him the merchant's head.

After giving one glance to the head, he threw the human away. With a splash, the human landed onto a pond of blood.

“Ah, that guy is in the list. It was someone on the lowest seat of the merchant union, and also is a blood relative of one of the capital's generals.”

“I see...Thank you. Since it is on the list, then I need to take good care of it.”

The girl put the head inside a sack full of heads.

Inside the blood soaked sack, there were a great number of heads. The head of a hundred battles veteran pirate, and the face of a noble from a powerful family that had committed wicked acts over any limits too. And all of the heads had their eyes widely opened in fear. Looking inside the sack, Vrusto whistled at what he saw.\*3



“So scary. Aren’t they of ojou-chan’s same race?”

“Same race?”

The girl leaned her head to the side.

“It feels like I’ve said this many times, but... While we are from the same species, those are enemies. Captain Leivain had said before. The merchant union refused our negotiations and killed fifteen of our messengers. We gave our final warning, telling them what would happen if they refused, but they ignored it. That’s why we must destroy the city and eliminate any opposition.”

“You are so scary, you that made all this become reality, ojou-chan. Well, I guess it’s Perikka’s merchant union’s fault for ignoring the last warning. Even though it wouldn’t end up with everything reeking of blood if they didn’t... By the way, use honorifics. One way or another, I’m ojou-chan’s instructor, right?”

“Right now we are still , so it doesn’t matter. Besides, I’m higher ranked than you, you know?”

“Yes, yes, I will be sure to take care... Ah, the chit-chat was supposed to have ended already. Don’t low your guard and end up dying, second lieutenant Riku.”

Vrusto lightly patted the girl’s shoulder.

And now, once again readying his spear, he ran after a place that humans seemed to be hiding.

In the blood soaked street, only the girl was remaining. While fixing the position of halberd that she was leaning on her shoulder, she closed her eyes.

“Even though I used to be from a spiritualist family, to think I would be commanding demon troops.”

She started to listen attentively to the sounds of the surroundings.

And she didn't hear any human voice.

The only sound she had heard was the sound of the demons destroying the human city.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 10**

# TRANSFER ORDER

Whether people at castles or at villages were shocked by seeing her, nothing of the sort would matter during the war.

Even if she was a human and a descendant from a famous spiritualist family, she wielded her power as a member of the Demon Lord army and was accepted. If she was strong, she would be able to keep living, but if she were weak, she would die and lose her place to belong to.

And more than anything... she was had been able to obtain a place to belong to.

If she was strong, she would be able to live on and protect the place she belonged to, and she was weak, she would simply lose such place. For that sake she would swing her halberd. When she was taking and losing life on both sides, Riku would become free. As if it wasn't unnatural at all, she would feel at ease in such times.

“Well then, let's go report, shall we?”

Riku was wearing the armor she had been carefully polishing.

Just as the color of her hair, the red armor was difficult to differentiate from blood. And so, every time she would go clean the armor, without her noticing, some blood stains would remain. As a human descendant from a spiritualist family, she was a target of despise and mockery, and there was no reason to give people more reasons for doing that.

Besides, she didn't wish for the impression of the Dragon Demon Division because of her stained armor.

“Yotto”(よっと)

Riku lifted her halberd she had similarly polished up to her shoulder.

Leaning that weight she had already become used to on her shoulder, she headed out by foot to the room her superiors were waiting. The blowing wind was refreshing and somewhat warm. Looking up to the sky, it was a radiant blue sky just like that day. After seeing that, Riku gave a faint smile. Since then, ten years had passed and she was now seventeen years old. The memories of when she was still seven were like a distant horizon, but she would remember that day as if it was yesterday.

How she was thrown down a cliff and being carried by the waves to that port city.

And the face of the demon who was more important to her than her life, who had saved her, who was about to die.

“Hey, the one there is that rumored...”

“Ah, that jumped-up human. So unfair, really.”\*1

Riku heard the whisperings of gossip.

And because of that, her happy mood was blown away in one go. At the corner of her view, there were two demons looking at her full of mockery. She didn't really care, but she didn't like this back-talking either. And more than anything, she really hated to be brought back to reality. In that instant, she felt like using her halberd on them, but held herself back, knowing that if she were to cause trouble here, all it would happen was she being sent to confinement. The hand that had lost its intent slowly went back to its place, and Riku left the place at a fast pace.

...Pretending that she hadn't noticed anything.

“...”

Not all demons looked with disdain to Riku. For instance, the demon that had been together with her through her life in the Dragon Demon Division from the time she was seven years old acknowledged Riku's capability. To be fair, there weren't many demons that were like that to her to speak of, but after living together for many days, there were a few that were enough to be worth noting were being formed.

During these ten years, the Division had achieved many merits and increased in its size,

and so having the number of newly recruited soldiers being many. From the very beginning, the Dragon Demon Division had always been composed mostly out of newcomers. And such demons had antipathy against Riku. In a certain way, this happening was only obvious.

After what happened before, ignoring the discrimination gazes that would be directing to her from times to times, she had finally reached the place she needed to get to. Fixing her hair with her hand, she lightly knocked the door. As she did that, from inside the room, a sharp voice of a man came in response.

“Who is it?”

Hearing the familiar voice she hadn't hear by a few days, her gloomy feeling was blown away.

Deeply inhaling some air, she raised her voice as much as possible.

“From the Dragon Demon Division serving the lieutenant general Leivein Adlar, second lieutenant Riku Barusak has returned.”\*2

“Enter.”

“Yes!”

Straightening up her back as much as possible, she entered the room.

And then, she looked at the young man, who was doing his official duties. Comparing to when Riku first met him, his stature became much taller, and had grown two splendid wings. Slowly raising his view from the document he was looking, he looked at Riku with his never changing two sharp eyes.

“Is that so? You've done a good job, second lieutenant Riku.”

The corners of his mouth had slightly risen.

Hearing Leivein's words of appreciation, Riku's heart started beating fast.

Leivein, who had saved her, was Riku's benefactor, and also the person she had sworn loyalty to. Indeed... It was only for her to hear these kind of words from Leivein that she swung her halberd. Kneeling using one her knees, she had deeply bowed.

"Yes! I'm very honored by your words."

"I've heard that together with Vrusto, with about two hundred soldiers you had gained control of Perikka. With all the resisting forces eliminated and with control of the merchants, as a trade city, it will be very useful in the future. This time, you were noted even among the top brass. Charlotte-sama is deeply pleased with your deeds."

"Could you be talking about that girl?"

For her to disregard the higher position this much, Leivein got a bit surprised.

Now that the Demon Lord is sealed, his younger sister Charlotte, in his stead, is commanding the demon race.

To Riku, the most she could be viewed as was as just "some important demon figure". To her, what mattered the most was Leivein. It could be said that anything else didn't really matter.

To Riku's actions, Leivein made an displeased gaze.

"It's the Demon Lord's younger sister, and his substitute. You should call her Charlotte-sama. Calling her like that is disrespectful."

"Yes, I beg your pardon."

"...Well, it's fine. From the achievements of this time, it has been decided for you to be promoted from second lieutenant to first lieutenant. Because of the promotion, a transfer order had been given to you."

"Transfer order?"

The moment she had heard that, she felt the impact similar to being hit by a club in the head.

Without thinking, Riku had approached Leiven. Because of how strong she had hit the table with her hands, great amounts of documents fell to the ground.

“Why!? Why can’t I be in the Dragon Demon Division anymore!? If that’s the case, I don’t need the promotion to first lieutenant. My life was saved by commander Leivein. That’s why I must fight for...”

“Calm down, first lieutenant Riku Barusak.”

“Don’t worry, you will still be aligned to the Dragon Demon Division. After one year, you will be able to come back here.”

Hearing that, she stood rock still.

She would be able to come back eventually, so she didn’t understand why it was necessary for her to transfer. And so, she asked.

“After one year, I will be allowed to come back, right? But if that is the case, then being transferred...”

“The reason for your transfer is for you to acquire experience, since you are someone that will eventually rise to be an important figure. Being to a place you are not used to, many hardships will come after all. I will let you bring together with you a number of soldier as your subordinates... You should be thankful for me to be giving a recommendation on you.”

For the sake of acquiring experience, as someone that will become an important figure.

She had heard various words from his mouth, but all that really entered her ears was about when Leiven spoke of him giving a recommendation. Her respected and beloved Leivein had given her a recommendation.



Only that was enough.

Without saying anything, Riku put one of her knees to the ground.

Doing a respectful bow, which was one of the demon standards, she looked up at Leivein.

“Thank you very much, captain Leivein. After coming back, I will without doubt had become stronger and more than before a capable soldier.”

“Umu.”( うむ ) (It means yes for those that don't know)

Only saying that, he extended his hand as to say that she was dismissed.

Quickly leaving the room, Riku turned her back from Leivein.

Having been decided that she was to be transferred, Riku had a mountain of things she needed to prepare. In order to not make a fool of the image of Leivein's Dragon Demon Division, she needed to make the preparations to the best of her ability. And so, Riku was very enthusiastic on that.

“I'm looking forward to what will become of you, Riku.”

From behind her, the voice resounded.

Unconsciously, Riku turned her head back.

Leiven's eyes were already turned to the documents, but even so, Riku was very happy.

Leiven always called her name together with her ranking. So having him calling her without any ranking title was really nostalgic to her.

Having the impression on how much she was trusted, she became even more motivated.

Because of that, she ended up letting out a faint smile.

“Yes!”

Doing one last bow, she left the room.

She swore to her heart that she would definitely correspond to his expectations.

---

Replacing the in a good mood Riku, Piguro now was the one entering the room.

Leivein would as always be diligently focusing on the documents. But this time, right at the moment when Piguro had entered the office, he had lifted his head to look at him.

“What is it?”

“There were so many choices, so many choices.”

With his monocle shining, he came closer to Leivein.

Different from Riku, who was in high spirits, Piguro’s mood was so bad it was falling to the ground.

Piguro’s mother was Leivein’s wet nurse. And other than that, he was also ordered by Leivein’s father to be his friend and to protect him as a body-guard since the time he was only a child.

Following Leivein’s promotions, the Dragon Demon little battalion, which was commanded by him, came through big changes and increased to the size of a division. The ten thousand demons serving under him, as a lieutenant general, was only appropriate.

Exactly because of that that the incident was the worst possible case.

“Why did you give recommendation to Riku Barusak? Even though I told you to

recommend Momein or Shiruk rather than that thing.”

Since then, it had been ten years, and even so, he didn't trust Riku at all.

Of course he recognized Riku's fighting prowess. Swinging her halberd around, her figure running through the battlefield was like the one of a battle devil. People that had as much power as her, even among the demons, weren't many. There weren't many, but there were people that were in awe of Riku, calling her [Red Devil].

But Riku Barusak was a human. And more so, someone of one of the spiritualist families. It was obvious that she was untrustworthy.

And that's why he believed recommending either the demons Shiruk or Momein would be better.

“It's very simple. Even though she has this much strength, she still have room for improving. And more than that, I'm intending on making her my Right-wing”

“Doing that is a mistake is what I've been telling you! As if I would let you make a human spiritualist your Right-wing!!”

With a loud sound, Piguro hit the table.

Right-wing, or so to say, could be said to have a similar to an adjutant.

The number two of the Dragon Demon Division was the staff officer Piguro. But, in the vital position of adjutant, there was nobody. He wanted Leivein to have that position filled as soon as possible, but he couldn't let Riku take the position of adjutant.

“Do you even know what you are talking about? If Riku Barusak becomes the adjutant, she becomes the number two of the division... You should already know what this would mean, right?”

The human Riku, who all she really had was physical power would stand above him. He would need to be asking advice to such a thing.

Just by thinking about that his head started to hurt. Besides that, if he let a human become an adjutant, the other divisions from the demon lord army would definitely laugh and look down on them. That's why he had listed other demons for the recommendation. But in the end, Leivein had ignored his proposals.

"That thing is strong."

"I know. But you see, even if it is strong, but there is no meaning to that. There are also things like reputation."

"That's why, in order to acquire that, I recommended it."

Leivein drank the whole water of the glass that was near him all at once.

Doing that, it made one wonder how thirsty he actually was. With water glass empty, Leivein put it down back to where it was, doing a sound of the glass hitting the table.

"That thing will definitely not bite me. It's only a faithful dog I carefully trained."

"The Dragon Demon Division is already an unified existence. For there to be somebody to betray..."

"Is impossible. Don't tell me things I already know."

"That thing is by far much more capable. Specially in the battlefield. Even after unsealing the Demon Lord-sama, it will definitely be of use to the Demon Lord army. But that thing has no social standing or someone's backings. There is the problem with her being a descendant of spiritualists. So, in order to deal with those problems, what is the necessary thing to do? To simply obtain everything by sheer power. Building up achievements so that everyone can't not recognize her strength, and moreover attracting many supporters. This is simply the best thing to do."

Finishing saying what he wanted, he immediately turned his eyes back to the documents.

Piguro became unable to say anything further.

Her relation to spiritualists which burdened her from getting promotions must be made unnoticeable and negligible as soon as possible. If such is not done, then not only her promotion for right-wing, but most importantly, her affiliation to the Demon Lord army would be threatened.

In order to fix this, Leivein had sent her away. If Riku is capable of having another division to recognize her strength, then in the Demon Lord army, in which strength is the most important thing, she will have a successful career. The principle behind his decisions are reasonable, but even so, Piguro couldn't accept it.

"Why... Why do you favor that girl? If it is about strength, then there are other people too."

Leiven didn't say anything to answer.

He only kept managing the documents silently.

Giving a sigh as if he was tired of this, Piguro left the room. But before he could even touch the door, it had been opened wide in one go. The one there was Riku, looking to be in hurry. Because of that, her hair was a bit messed up.

"I'm very much sorry, captain Leivein! Ah, staff officer Piguro was also here."

"...What is it, second lieutenant Riku Barusak?"

Piguro couldn't hide his bad mood.

Riku also noticed that Piguro was in a bad mood. But since he was pretty much all the time like that, she didn't think much about it. While bowing, she said...

"Yes, actually... I actually forgot to ask where I am being transferred to."

"Are you stupid?"

Piguro held his head with his hands.

Perhaps with the slightest chance not... No, rather, without doubt, after coming back from the transfer, Riku would definitely have accumulated many achievements.

Thinking how this stupid person would soon become his superior, Piguro's mood became even worse.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 11**

# **.DELIVERY OF GOODS AND THE SMELL OF BLOOD**

Cutting through the night wind, there was a group riding their horses.

The black carriage and the horsemen wearing a black coat were blending with the darkness of the night.

If it wasn't for the sound of the horse hooves hitting on the ground, then except for the animals adapted to seeing in the dark, noticing them would have been extremely difficult.

The one leading all the fifty members of that horse group was first lieutenant Riku. Hiding under her hood the red hair that would stand out even at night, she kept concentrated, looking forward. She changed her gaze to a stone lying on the roadside which had some letters engraved on its surface. Giving one look to the letters, she once again looked forward. And then, still looking to the front, a horseman beside her raised his voice.

“Soon we will have contact to the target. Are you ready?”

“Yes, no problems.”

“Is that so? Good.”

The corners of her mouth rose.

Breathing the cold night air that was going against her face, it made her burning like feelings refresh a bit. Even so, couldn't be settled with just that. With her eyes shining in a fiery gaze, she spoke.

“To all soldiers. From now on, the mission will start. With the resolve to keep up even if your life is in risk, execute lieutenant general Leivein's order.”



“...No, ojou-chan. It was lieutenant general Gortoberuk’s orders, actually.”

The horseman beside her... Warrant officer Vrusto, said while giving a sigh.

Vrusto’s eyes looked like they were dead. His usual combative face nowhere to be found. Only showing a apathetic expression, his horse kept moving on.

“Besides, it is not a job that you need to risk your life for, you know. The job given to us was to just to send lieutenant general’s birthday present to his grandchild.”

“...It’s the transportation of important goods...”

“Yes, yes... Ahh, why did I need to be transferred as well...? You are already seventeen, so you don’t need me to babysit you anymore.”\*1

Riku didn’t say anything to answer.

She thought it was very rude of him to say he was babysitting her, but she didn’t feel like answering to the provocation.

She would complete her task perfectly. That was the one dominant thought in her head. In order to protect the place she belonged to, and to become a more useful to Leivein even if it was only a bit, she would act.

If it was for that sake, even if it was some chore that couldn’t even be considered a job suitable to be given to a first lieutenant no matter how one would think. Something such as the chore of sending a birthday present, even that she would do.

She would send the package not too soon, nor too late from the time lieutenant general Gortoberuk ordered to send it, but right at the time. Of course, during the course, that present mustn’t suffer any damage. Sending the present in a perfect state too was one of Riku’s responsibilities.

“Like I was saying... You are putting all this enthusiasm in the wrong place. You should be angrier about this unreasonable job. Good grief, and also what was captain Leivein even thinking? From anyone that it could have been, for us to be transferred to lieutenant general Gortoberuk’s army.”

As she heard Vrusto murmurs, Riku kept going forward.

Gradually, firelight began showing through the gaps between the trees. Soon they would leave the forest. And right after that, near there should be where Gortoberuk's villa is.

This job, that from the Myuuz castle, where Gortoberuk was stationed, they had to go through the mountains and keep fast pace until nightfall, was about to end.\*2

"I wonder if it is here."

Leaving the gloomy forest, there was a castle in there that was so white it seemed to be made of chalk.

Because of the demon's circumstances, they were forced to live hidden. And to such demons, it was said that Gortoberuk's home was the one of most splendor. If Gortoberuk home wasn't one of a demon's but of a minister that served the king, then comparing it to the buildings from the noble's district, the ones from the noble's district were several times more elegant.

Pulling the reins of the horse, Riku slowly advanced towards the gorgeous gate.

"From the Demon Lord army third, under lieutenant general Gortoberuk, it is first lieutenant Riku Barusak. By the orders of the lieutenant general, I came to deliver the present to his grandchild."

As she spoke to the gatekeeper, he nodded.

"The delivery was just in time. Good job. We will take care of the present. There wasn't any damage, was there?"

"There were no problems... Here it is."

Riku lightly made a sign with her hand.

Following that, together, the soldiers began an operation to lower down the present.

There was a reason why only for this time's job of delivering the present, fifty cavalryman were needed. It was simple. First, the amount of presents for the single grandchild was over thirty. And more over, each of them were fragile pieces of handiwork that had glass easy to break on them. Even with the slightest impact, they would end up breaking, and so, one soldier would be carrying a present, and for each one of them, the remaining would ride their horses near them as to protect the present.

Vrusto still considered it to be a wasting of time of capable personal. But since it was orders coming from Gortoberuk, there was nothing to be done about it.

Without saying a single complaint, Riku had followed as she had been told to.

Riku looking at the presents contents being carefully checked, and when she was about to give a sigh of relief, right at that moment...

“Huh?”

Suddenly, Riku felt a chill at her back.

While still riding her horse, she looked behind. But all there was there was the dark forest. The blowing wind was roaring. With that, she frowned. Although she kept looking at the roaring forest, nothing happened.

While looking to the forest, she thought there was something wrong in there. After finishing unloading the presents, Vrusto came close to her, sick and tired of the job.

“What's the problem, first lieutenant Riku?”

“No... I kind of felt a bad feeling about something.”

“Stupid, you are only overthinking... Hm?”

Vrusto's nose started to move.

Right at that moment, Vrusto's face returned to his usual face full of ambition. His face that previously looked like he was about to die seemed like it was a lie. With eyes shining with ferocity, he looked at the dark forest.

"Girl...I am smelling blood."

"Blood?"

"Yes, from behind. It's coming closer."

Riku regained her grip over the reins.

Making the horse turn, it slowly walked to the direction of the forest. As Riku came closer, her demon subordinates separated as to open a way to her. As the horse was slowly walking, Riku was gripping her halberd that was on her back. Her sharp eyes were look\*3

"First lieutenant Barusak, are there any problems?"

The gatekeeper, who thought Riku's actions were suspicious, came closer.

The gatekeeper was keeping his hand onto the sword at his waist. But Riku wasn't even looking at him. She only looked at the darkness of the forest concentrated. With Riku not answering anything, he ran out of patience. When he was about to raise his voice, it happened.

The forest trees unnaturally trembled, and then, like a ripe fruit, some sort of black figure fell down to the ground.

When the figure was about to touch the ground, right at that instant, Riku wielded her halberd. And then, she pointed her halberd to the black silhouette.

"Who is it? Depending on the answer, I will kill you."

Being pointed by the halberd, the figure was moving in panic.

Riku, who was intently looking at the figure, let out a surprised voice.

It was actually a demon with rabbit ears. His whole body to even his long ears were covered in mud and sweat. His face and arms were covered in wounds and his breathing was unsteady. But even with all that, it wasn't that what Riku was surprised about.

What she was surprised about was that the rabbit eared demon was wearing an armor of the Demon Lord army. And more so, one with the symbol of the third army, which was under Gortoberuk.

It was clear that something happened with the main forces.

"F-f-from th-the third army, of the messengers unit, I'm sergeant major Roppu Nezaarand. I have an urgent report to the first lieutenant Riku Barusak."

Roppu was speaking with a voice that was close to screaming.

Because of the unusual situation, everyone in the surroundings fell silent. Without doubt, it couldn't be good news. Riku looked at Roppu's face covered in sweat.

"What is it?"

Was the only words that left her mouth.

Roppu hurriedly started speaking the message.

"The fort Rein is suffering heavy assault from the spiritualist forces. Even though lieutenant general Gortoberuk himself participated the fight, it was a major defeat. The lieutenant general's forces successfully retreated to the Myuuz castle, but at this state, they will soon end up being pushed into an encirclement."

Everybody fell into deep silence.

Nobody did a single sound. Including the gatekeepers that were gathered nearby, everyone

had their face color change. Most people lost the color of blood from their face and kept their mouths shut closed without being able to say anything. It was as if they were hoping that Roppu would suddenly say all of that was just a joke.

Nobody opened their mouth. Eventually, the silence was becoming more and more unbearable.

As to break the silence, somebody raised his voice.

“Hey, that’s a lie, right? Because, the Myuuz castle should have twenty thousand soldiers, right? Hey, you too say something.”

“Y, yes, right. Yes, it’s twenty thousand! There is no way for someone to corner this amount of force in one night...”

“Hahaha, it was a lie then. It’s obvious that it is a lie! Somebody say that it is a lie!”

But nobody could say for sure it was a lie.

Even if they wanted to believe it was a lie, there was no way they could really believe so.

Just by looking at the Roppu, who was full of wounds, that one could see how obvious it was that all of it wasn’t a lie. They didn’t know about strategies that were deployed against the spiritualists, but for the lieutenant general Gortoberuk to be cornered like that, it could be said that the annihilation of the third army was certain.

With much more the reason, now that she understood the situation, the halberd that was being placed right next to Roppu’s neck remained unmoved.

Looking at Riku, who was unmoving even by the slightest tremor, Roppu trembled a bit.

“L, lieutenant?”

“Roppu Nezaarand, was it? Can I ask you one thing?”

Riku looked at Roppu's round and teary eyes.

It didn't look like Roppu was telling any lies. Probably, the fort Rein indeed had fallen and lieutenant general Gortoberuk had been put in a difficult situation. But even so... No, exactly because of that that Riku needed to confirm something.

"Did you see the flags of the spiritualists that attacked?"

"The flags, you say? It should have been... One with an unicorn and another one with a griffon."

"A flag with a griffon?"

Hearing that, she unconsciously put her hand near her mouth.

Very old memories were emerging.

The unicorn family crest would be from the Bistolrur household. For generations it had been a spiritualist family whose head was always a female, and the current head of that family was a girl that should have the same age as Rook.

But the problem wasn't there.

"Yes, a griffon flag! A griffon emblem, right!?"

Riku started to press near her mouth with more strength.

If she didn't that, she wouldn't be able to stop herself from showing a warped smile. If she were to calm down a bit, she would instead be dancing in happiness. It was to that extend that she was happy. So happy that she couldn't bear.

A spiritualist family whose family crest was one of a griffon, it could only be one.

"If there are spiritualists from the Barusak family, then I really need to go face them."

If it was any other spiritualist family, she would just leave someone like Gortoberuk to his death and go back to Leivein.

First, going to an army that has is about to be trapped into an encirclement is difficult. In this situation, even if she were to go back to the Dragon Demon Division, nobody would say anything against.

But if the Barusak spiritualists were involved, then it was a different case.

Whether it was her little brother, or her father, or her big sister, she needed to prove she could crush them.

The people that didn't accept her were now in front of her eyes. Was there even a reason not to engage? No, there wasn't. In fact, not going to kill them was what was unreasonable.\*4

Her arms and legs and her heart were being embraced by a indomitable intent. It made her want to break, twist, crush, to destroy until not even a single thing was left undamaged. From the insides of her body, a scorching happiness she hadn't felt long ago was going through her body, making it surge with a burning wrath.

"First lieutenant Barusak. Could it be that you...were secretly leaking information to them?"

The guard keeper that already had drawn his sword was now in a severe tone asking her.

Seeing the stupid gatekeeper with a stiff face, she couldn't keep herself from smiling anymore.

"Leaking information? Me doing that for them? Pffhahahahahahaha!"

In a high pitched tone, she started laughing at the gatekeeper.

Without hesitating over doing it in front of so many people, she kept laughing. In that moment, the gatekeeper was shrinking away from her, but Riku didn't even pay any heed



to it. After laughing for a while, she went back to her serious face. And then, she pointed her halberd to the useless gatekeeper that was suspecting her of betrayal.

“No way I would do something like that. Are you making fun of Leivein’s Dragon Demon Division? Well, since you won’t believe me anyway, what about if I go take a few of their generals’ heads? Whether it is one, two or three.”

Still with her serious looks, she looked at the gatekeeper.

While looking at the halberd that was pointed right in front of his nose, the gatekeeper weakly fell down, sitting on the ground. Completely ignoring the gatekeeper that had completely lost his boldness, she moved her halberd aside. Turning away from the gatekeeper, she looked at the fifty demons she had brought along with her. Like they were already imagining what was about to happen, most had faces that were sinking into despair.

With a tone of voice not different from her usual, she asked them.

“What was the job that was tasked to us?”

“It was... Delivering the present and going back to the Myuuz castle.”

Among the soldiers, one person timidly answered.

And to his answer, Riku nodded. Putting her halberd onto her shoulder, she exchanged glances with the anxious soldiers.

As always, her face was expressionless, but her eyes were shining with ecstasy. Magnificently, Riku declared.

“Yes, until we come back to the castle, our job isn’t finished. Even if there is something hindering us along the way... Don’t worry, I have a plan.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 12**

# THE SECRET STRATEGIC MEETING AT MYUUZ CASTLE

The Myuuz castle was a natural stronghold.

It was close to the territory where humans lived and the spiritualists were aware of its existence.

But even in these two hundred years, it still wasn't broken through. One of the reasons was because it was surrounded by tall mountains. But it wasn't only that.

The main strength of the Myuuz castle was in outside of the mountain range. Around the mountains, there was a very deep forest that would confuse one's sense of direction. For the demons, with hidden marks throughout the paths and with their sense of smell, it was still possible to advance with some effort, but the reality was different for the humans. Even if they had enough luck to go through the forest, there was only one path to Myuuz castle. After going up the mountains, what would be lying in wait was fort Rein. Even if the enemy gathered many strong soldiers, by the time they would get there, they would all have accumulated exhaustion.

Inside the fort, with demons that were still full of energy fighting against the exhausted soldiers, the sides that would win and lose were very obvious. Without being able to take hold of the fort, many soldiers would perish.

But even so, every ten years, the Shiidoru kingdom would gather up soldiers to go on an offensive against the castle.

But even so, in these two hundred years, not even once did they succeed going through the mountains.

But that was until this evening.

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“How... What in the world did happen?”

In one of the rooms of the Myuuz castle, there was the figure of a demon that was angry up to his limits.

With his hand, he brushed aside all the documents that were accumulated in his table. Just like a flood, all the documents were spread through the polished floor. But as if it wasn't enough to settle his anger, he threw a flower vase that . The azure vase that had been made with great effort made a impressive sound as it broke and its shards were scattered to all sides. The petals dejectedly scattered around and the water gradually drenched the documents.

“Lieutenant general Gortoberuk, please, get hold of yourself!”

As he was saying that, the staff officer rushed over to Gortoberuk, who was losing his mind.

But right when the staff officer got close to Gortoberuk, he was glared by him. His eyes that were already becoming bloodshot produced an force that except for the staff officer, who had always been together with Gortoberuk, serving him in the good and harsh times, made everyone in the room scared.

“During the time that I had been entrusted with this fort... During these one hundred and fifty years, not once was it broken through. Not only once!! Not only once, you know!? Then, why did it end up like that!?”

“Lieutenant general, please calm down.”

“There is no way I can be calm!”

Gortoberuk drew his long sword.

With his state of mind, he was well capable of cutting someone's head off right now. If he

was handled wrong right now, then perhaps everyone reunited in his room could end up losing their heads. The staff officer shrank away, but he knew that if he backed off right now, things would end worse. Mustering his courage and giving a deep breath, he advanced forward, wondering whether he was capable of stepping his foot inside the range of Gortoberuk's long sword.\*1

"Your anger will cloud you from doing correct decisions."

"Tch, I know that!"

While saying that, Gortoberuk sat down on his chair.

But even so, he couldn't completely keep his anger under control. His forehead was full of popped up veins and his eyes were still bloodshot.\*2

"Hey, did you send the messenger?"

"I sent one to the nearest of our garrison, and the messenger will probably pass by Barusak's squad that are now delivering the present to you grandchild. But the chances of him getting there is extremely close to zero."\*3

"...Unfortunately, it is hard to expect any reinforcements."

The staff office apologetically added up his comment to the other subordinate's report.

The surviving soldiers inside the Myuuz castle were only ten thousand strong.\*4 Taking away the soldiers that were necessary for protecting the castle, the amount of demons that were usable for combat were in between eight thousand and nine thousand. There was also the problem of there being demons that had given up because of how the historical Rein fort had fallen. When the lieutenant general Gortoberuk asked for advice, all that he was told was to somehow boost the morale of the troops, but at this point, to keep it from falling even lower was already the best it was possible. Once the morale had fallen down, increasing it from there was something next to impossible to do.

"When fighting against spiritualists, even against a small amount, it is necessary to prepare many more soldiers. The incoming spiritualists are about five thousand strong... This is a bit bad for us."

“Bad? That is just perfect!”

While Gortoberuk tightly grasped his sword, he hit the floor with it, putting his hatred onto the blow. With the tremor, the broken shards in the floor were trembling. A crack opened in the floor and its tiles flipped over.\*5

“Just report to Charlotte-sama that we annihilated those foolish spiritualists. There is no need for a humiliating report of defeat! ...From now on, we will attack.”

“We will attack? I can’t agree with this!”

His adjutant’s face instantly turned pale.

Not only in soldier strength they had disadvantage, but the morale of the soldiers were low. The adjutant couldn’t imagine them winning no matter how.

“Fm, then, you are telling me that we should go for the siege? Doing that is what it actually is foolish.”( ㄟ ㄟ ㄟ )

Gortoberuk snorted.

“If we go for the siege, then the soldier morale will be decreasing even more. At least, they don’t have much knowledge of the terrain. Before they finish scouting through it, attacking is the best plan.”

“Indeed... But, even if we confront them, there is no way for us to win.

Even if they were to go attack, they still needed to think out a plan.

If they were to recklessly attack the spiritualists, they would only fall before their power. If their numbers were greater, it would still be possible for them to press onto them. But,

“Yes, that’s just as you say. Well then, what should we do?”

Gortoberuk next looked at the staff officer. The staff officer had his finger near his chin and started deeply thinking.

“Well... To me, the reason why the fort had fallen so easily really picks my interest. In order for us to not lose our way, we use the marks that are around the forest. But those should have been only possible for us to understand. For the spiritualists from this time, as to why they were able to get to the fort without getting lost... The only possibility I can think of is that there is a traitor between our ranks.”

“You should think about something like that later! The traitor is obviously the dog that Adlar raised anyway. There is no traitor inside the castle now, so we should only focus in thinking about our plans of attacking.”

Gortoberuk rejected his staff officer's thoughts on that. But even so, the staff officer still felt some kind of bad feeling lingering at the corner of his mind. Deciding it was only his imagination, he shook his head. Rather than that, he knew that it was important for them to go attack the enemy as soon as possible. If they weren't fast, the spiritualists would besiege the castle and cut them from receiving supplies. As the time would pass, the food stocks would diminish and they would lose any chance they had of winning.

“Let's see... Let's split our army into two. Then, attack the enemy from two sides.”

“A pincer attack? Can we even do something like that?”

A question mark floated above the adjutant's head. If they still had the fort, they could do a pincer attack coming from there and from the castle. But right now, it was impossible. Being asked about that, the staff officer nodded while making a serious face.

“Let's say, if general Gortoberuk were to take part of his army and go on an offensive outside the castle himself, how would the enemy react?”

“Well, the general went out... The spiritualist would send their soldiers after him.”

“Right? That's where we will be aiming for. We would only wait for the spiritualists turn their back from the castle, and with the soldiers that would be on standby at the castle, we would attack them from behind.”

“I see now.”

As he brushed his prided moustache, Gortoberuk nodded.

“And on other hand, if they go after the castle, then I´m can simply go attack behind them. In doing so, we would be able to cause them irrecoverable losses. Would that be your plan?”

“Yes, that is exactly it.”

The staff officer slowly . Gortoberuk smiled with confidence. For this plan to work, it was needed for the garrisoned troops and the troops outside to cooperate perfectly. But While making a sound, Gortoberuk stood up from his chair and held his long sword towards the ceiling.

“Immediately ready the preparations for battle!! Soon, we will be attacking those filthy fellows!!”

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Meanwhile, the spiritualists also were having their own discussions about the war.

Inside the headquarters pavilion, there were four spiritualists discussing. Among those, there was the Bistolru household´s young family head, Selenstinna Bistolru. A girl with short hair and eyes with visible white between the iris and the lower eyelid\*6. Because of that, she could be said to have a very peculiar appearance. But even so, the chestnut-colored hairpin that was keeping her front hair place gave her a certain girlish appeal. Because Selestinna was participating of her first war since she became the head of her family, she was tense, but she was even more tense because of her childhood friend that was in front of her lost in thoughts.

Her childhood friend, the next head of the Barusak household, Rook Barusak, was now looking at the map, and with a serious face, thinking about something. While his usual face was of someone that lacked interest in everything, she was also charmed by his serious face.



“...Seles, is there something on my face?”

Because of how she was intensely looking at his face, thinking of how weird it was, Rook raised his head to look at her. In panic, she shook her head.

“The-there is nothing on it. More importantly, what are you being so self-conscious for? Are you stupid, Rook?”

“Self-conscious? Well, it doesn’t matter. I’ve seen through the enemy strategy. They will split into two armies and look forward to attack us from two sides.”\*7

As if it was nothing, Rook just said what strategy the enemy was going to do. Since he started to think, only a few minutes passed. Selestinna put her hands to her mouth.

“Well, that was very fast. On what basis are you saying that?”

“You see, I’ve just got new information. It says about their strategy. It is from that Kurumi girl that is infiltrated within the Demon Lord army.”

“Rook is really amazing. Just with these informations, you are really making a name yourself.”

Selestinna remembered about the time when they attacked the fort.

She thought that it would end up with them getting lost like always, but it was different this time. With Rook guiding the army, by relying on the stones that were on the roadside, they were able to easily find the way that led to the fort. He himself said it was a secret and didn’t tell anyone about how he guided them there, but this too was probably information he got from that demon called Kurumi.

She was impressed of Rook because he was able to get allies even from demons. But while there was that, because he had been only relying on that demon and not relying on herself, that had been fighting alongside him, was a sad reality.

“...Did something happen to you?”

By saying that, he must have noticed her lonesome face. Rook was now looking at Selestinna's face. Because of how sudden he looked at him, she didn't have time to prepare her heart. With even her ears red, she shook her head in an incredible speed while blushing.

"N-nothing happened, such a thing!!"

"Is that so? Then it's fine, but, actually I have a request for you."

"A-a request, you say?"

Selestinna had never been asked for anything from Rook.

With her heart jumping, she was waiting for Rook's next words.

"Actually, from now on, I need to go back to home."

"Eh?"

"I'm intending to leave the Barusak army that will be remaining here to general Toudo. Ah, general Toudo is a spiritualist that had been serving the Barusak household for a long time, so he is someone you can rely on. But... This time's enemy... Is Gortoberuk. He is a strong opponent, and I'm a bit anxious on whether Toudo can win or not. That's why I am asking you Seles."

Rook took her hands, with their fingers entwining each other. Her white hands became slightly reddish.\*8

"Please Seles! Win the battle!"

Seles heart had decided.

Rook is relying on her. She must use up all of her strength in order to be . Then, at dawn after the won battle, she would magnificently arrange the Myuuz castle, and in there finally, she would confess to him. As she was being submerged by her sweet delusions, Rook left the pavilion.

But Seles didn't notice what happened after that. Rather, nobody had noticed.

“Alright! Seles confession event GET!”\*

With a fist pump, the next Barusak head cheered in joy.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 13**

# THE OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE FORT

Winter was approaching.\*1

With temperatures enough to freeze fingers, it was almost as if general winter himself was preparing to launch an offensive. Before one would notice, the breathed air had already become white. If rain was to pour, all this rain would have already turned into snow. Once there was snowfall, the shape of warfare would change. As snow would accumulate, the movement of the troops would slow down and transportation of food would become harder. For the spiritualists, the coming of winter was a disadvantage. And of course, to the demons that were restricted to the food stocked up in the castle, the long-drawn siege would be disadvantageous as well.

In other words, both the demons and spiritualists were eager to end this war. But in both of their dictionaries, there was no such word called truce. Until either side was completely destroyed, this war wouldn't end. This time's case, whether the demons would go for a do-or-die attack or if they were to seclude themselves in the castle, the flow of the war would change. In case the war would change to a siege, the battle would be decided by which side gives up first.

“...Well, I can't imagine lieutenant general Gortoberuk going for a siege though.”

As she was breathing out white vapor due to the cold, she sighed.

Gortoberuk, who would mostly deal with things using strength, was a demon that she just couldn't imagine going for a contest of endurance by holing himself up in the castle. In order to clear away the disgrace of having the fort being taken from him, he would just plan a strategy to go for and attack without doubt. Either way, Riku couldn't predict what kind of battle it would turn out to be.

But, rather than knowing Gortoberuk next moves, it was more important to think on how to take the fort back. It looked more or less something stupid to do, but even so, the forty nine demons were still following after her. Including her, all of them were going up the mountains. By the way, the one that wasn't there with them was at the foot of the

mountain stand-by, still mounting on the horse he had been riding on so far.

“Ha...Ha.... Just, a little bit more.”

Said Roppu Nezaarand while feebly breathing after he stopped his feet. With his ear and arms full of bandages, his figure was very pitiful. Putting his hands on his knees, he was catching his breath. No matter who, it was clear to anyone that would look at him that he was straining himself.

“Really, you are too weak.”

“Hey, ojou-chan. Shouldn’t have it been better if we had left that rabbit brat at the lieutenant general’s villa?

Vrusto was whispering next to Riku’s ear. Different from Roppu, Vrusto didn’t show any signs of being tired. In fact, demons that would show signs of exhaustion actually were what was very uncommon. Except for one of the demon races, the demons in general would ever so often have more physical strength than humans. If Roppu was at his perfect condition, he would most likely have been able to go up a mountain such as this one in one breath.

” I’m definitely being suspected of being a traitor. If I bring him along, I can prove I’ve not been planning anything along the way.”

“I see. That’s why you’ve been dragging this dead weight near you. I thought you were doing it just to have someone guiding us.”

“Well, there is that too.”

As a messenger, Roppu had been trained. And so, he knew very well about the terrain around here. This time too, he used a secret path and was able to escape from the fort. The path Riku was going through now was one different from the one generally used. Because it didn’t go through maintenance, it had rocks and branches that fell from the big trees around. Because of that, one could end up tripping without properly paying attention. In fact, there were soldiers that were covered in dirt just because of this reason. But even if it had all these problems, the enemy wouldn’t be aware of this path.

“Ah, uh... First lieutenant Barusak, the place you had pointed in the map before is about somewhere in here.”

Right at the time Riku stepped her foot onto a branch, Roppu humbly declared.

Just by turning your head, through the trees, it was possible to see the stone fort. One way or another, they were able to successfully go to the rear of the fort through a roundabout way.\*2 The place that general Gortoberuk's flag used to be set now had an unicorn and a griffon flag, both fluttering in the wind as if they were intimate to each other.\*3 With the corners of her mouth rising, she rose her right hand to signal her soldiers to stop.

“Thank you, sergeant major Roppu Nezaarand. For now you should wait here. That, unless you want to follow me in order confirm that I'm not a traitor.”

“Th-that...”

“What about if I take two or three enemy general heads? Would it be enough as a proof? Well, although I don't think there are any really good generals sitting in that fort.”

The general that was leading all this must be without mistake glaring at Myuuz castle at the plains down the mountains.

This fort capturing was only the appetizer before going for an offensive onto the plains. She needed to properly savor the taste. Riku lightly licked her lips.

“Now then, we will be proceeding according to the plan. Are you ready to take that dirty flag down?”

The forty nine demons all silently nodded. There were some demons that had their faces twisted in desperation, but Riku ignored it. In reality, Riku was a bit anxious about whether it would properly work or not. But then, if she were to behave like that, nothing good would come out of it.

“The attack will go with the five people we decided on before. The rest should follow warrant officer Vrusto's directions.”

“Understood. Don't die, ojou-chan”

Seeing Vrusto indiscreetly saluting to her, Riku gathered the four people she had selected before. They were demons of smaller stature that were more developed in terms of agility rather than strength.

“Don’t worry, I will be the one facing the general. Besides, not everyone are spiritualists in there. They should have mixed in many normal foot soldiers in their army. That’s why you all you will need to do is swing your sword around to your heart’s content. Once you think the situation is dangerous, you should run away from the fort.”

“”Yes.””

The four demons vigorously nodded. And then, Riku, who saw their confidence rise, once again made a sign.

As she did that, this time, five demons that had confidence in their physical strength went forward. All of them were strong enough to easily crush a horse. Riku herself and the four demons she had chosen got on these demon’s arms respectively. The foothold was bad, but even so, by crouching and leaning on her right knee, it was possible to get some extent of balance.

“Uh... Are you really planning on invading the fort like that?”

With a worried face, Roppu raised his eyes to the direction of the fort.

“The fort was firmly build. Since it didn’t fall in these two hundred years, then without siege weapons or big hammers, there is no way to invade it. We don’t have this sort of things prepared, so isn’t it fine to do it this way?”

“But we thought we had taken a secret path...”\*4

“Which side do you think the people at the fort are being more watchful?”

The Myuuz castle is being surrounded and the demons don’t have any army coming from the mountain side. With that, the only thing to be worried about is demon reinforcements coming. If something happens at Myuuz castle, the spiritualists that are surrounding the castle would definitely contact the people at the fort. Anything else don’t really need much



attention.

“In other words, this side has low priority. Rather than aiming for the well guarded part, it’s obvious that it is better to aim for the weaker one.”

Saying that, Riku looked forward. By straining her eyes, it was possible to see the tiny figures of guards protecting the fort. But not a single one of these guards were looking to her direction.

“Well then, let’s start, shall we?”

With that, the five muscular demons started moving. The demon whose arm Riku was on was in concentration, determining in which angle he should aim. The same was for the remaining four demons, calculating the distance and so on. Riku, who was a human, didn’t have good eyesight like demons. Perhaps it would have been possible for her to increase her eyesight with spiritualist arts, but she wasn’t able to use them. In order to not disturb the demons that were diligently working on the calculations, she could only held her breath.

“We will go now. 3...2...1...”

The demons swung their arms with all their strength, and with that, Riku was thrown high in the air. Right at the moment when she was thrown, she used her leg strength to add impulse. After that, there was no return. With the cold wind strongly blowing at her, it felt like a thousand needles were prickling her face. But pain of this extent didn’t matter. In Riku’s eyes, only the fort that was rapidly nearing closer was being reflected.

“Hm?”

At the moment when the soldier standing on the fort noticed about it, everything was already over for him.

Right at the moment the soldier turned his head, Riku’s figure suddenly right in front of his nose. Riku, who was flying through the air, extended her right feet frontwards and kicked the soldier in his belly. While still having her foot through the soldier who had fallen like a rag doll she drew her halberd. While thrusting her halberd at the neck of the guard that was lying on the floor, Riku gave a smile to the other guards.

“Good afternoon. It’s been sudden, but can you do me the favor of dying?”

Of course she didn’t wait for an answer. She didn’t need an answer anyway. Raising her blood covered halberd, she rushed forward, cutting down the soldier’s arm who was about to draw his sword, and decapitated another soldier that had been in panic.

“Shit, why is this red haired demon here!? It’s too strong!”

“Su-surround it! Let’s bring it down with numbers!”

As to surround Riku, the many guards approached forming a circle around her. They seemed to aim for doing a combined attack from all sides. As she was thinking whether she should make a path out of the encirclement through brute force or look for an opening, at that moment...

“As if I would let you!”

Coming from the sky, the demons suddenly appeared in a flash. \*5

With the sudden appearance of another enemy, the soldiers at the fort got their formation scrambled. With that, it became possible for Riku to break through it by herself. The four demons that were a bit late in taking part in the fight

“First lieutenant! Leave the small fries to us.”

“You should go after the big ones we can’t defeat!”

While soaking their small swords in blood, each of them were speaking in turns.

Even without them saying, it was what Riku was planning to do, but actually being said that felt very different. With that, Riku’s mouth turned into a happy smile.

“I will leave this place to you!”

Saying that, she left the place.

Not expecting that they would have been broken through, the soldiers were taken by surprise. Mowing down such soldiers, she rushed inside. She had thought that it would be a bit problematic for her to swing her halberd in the inner parts of the castle, but it seemed that they were unnecessary worries. Originally, it had been a demon fort, and so in other to be in accord to demons that had builds of over two meters, the ceiling was high and the corridors were wide. That's why she would be able to swing her halberd to her heart's content.

"The de-demons are attacking!"

"It's a monstrously strong red haired demon!!"

In response to the many shouts throughout the inner part of the fort, soldiers wearing spiritualist clothes appeared. The spiritualists that were wearing clothes which had that nostalgic Barusak crest were now coming at her with the demon banning swords. The swords that had demon banning power infused had the might of blowing off an arm just by grazing it. But that was only applied to demons. Therefore, Riku rushed at them without any worries.

"Did it lose its mind? That demon."

Against the spiritualists that were giving off smiles of ridicule, Riku instead sent back another smile.

"The stupid ones are you."

As if doing a run-up, she increased her speed and jumped upon a demon banning sword that was thrust at her. Sending the spiritualist that had his mouth opened in surprise flying with a kick, flying to the direction of a spiritualist from the Bistolru behind him, who was preparing to shoot an arrow. Lightly deflecting the arrow, she cut his head, sending it flying. With that, she had finished that spiritualist from Bistolru, that now had his head separated from his torso.

"One... No, two people."

Giving a glance to the spiritualist she had kicked before, it seems that the shape of his body and neck had changed a little. Perhaps because she had put in too much force, his

neck had been snapped.

“Now, who is next?”

Now looking back to, just like ants, a bunch of spiritualists were overflowing the place.

Many spiritualists had expressions on their faces that were curious to look at. She thought it was because two of their companions had been killed, but it seemed to be for a different reason. Whatever it may be, from the start, Riku didn't hold interest in what their expressions meant.

Full of insanity, she was about to rush after them, but right at that time...

A blazing ball of fire appeared right in front of her eyes.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 14**

# **.APPROACHING FIREBALL**

A blazing fireball appeared in front of her eyes.

It was only three fists of distance from her. In order to repel the attack, she rotated her halberd. Barely in time, the halberd defended from the approaching fireball in time, hitting at the tip of the axe shaped blade. With that, the fireball made a faint sound as it dissipated into pieces. Right after, Riku jumped back, landing with her left hand on the floor. Irritated, she looked at the surroundings. As she did that, she noticed that the spiritualists' expressions had slightly changed. Their faces had become much brighter in general. If one were to say, it was an expression that showed they still had hopes in winning.

Looking at such faces, it made her want to click her tongue.

“Who? The one that shot that.”

Of course, there was nobody that would answer her.

While she was calmly checking the faces of each spiritualist, as if a substitute for the answer of her question, another fireball was shot. This time, she knew where it came from. But even so, the fireball from this time seemed difficult to evade as well. Coming from the front, from their right side\*2, the fireball was so fast that it would put demons, who would boast of their physical strength, to shame, if both were to be compared. Defending from the fireball with her halberd, she fixed her eyes at the spiritualist that had fired the fireball. Amidst a crowd of spiritualists which naively had hopeful expressions, on the direction she was looking at now, there was a single spiritualist with a serious face.

“That from before... It was your doing, right?”

That spiritualist was using a crossbow. He did have a sword, but it seemed like his main weapon was the crossbow. Right next to his sword, there was a quiver for his crossbow. Plainly looking at him, he wouldn't be any different from a simple spiritualist. But in truth, that same spiritualist was the one that had thrown the fireball. From this fact, Riku let out a smile.

“What a relief... There was still a good quality head that remained at this fort.”

Riku remembered a memory from very long ago.

Infusing the demon banning technique onto an equipment. Any spiritualist could use such a basic and practical technique. But, for the spiritualists that had talent, they would go up one level above.

“I don’t remember it in details, but it was possible to infuse your own attribute in the weapon, right? In your case, it should be something like you putting your flame attribute in the arrow.”

Unintentionally, she smiled.

Back in the time when Riku was still aiming to become a spiritualist, such a thing as infusing her own attribute was a dream within a dream. As for now, it didn’t matter anymore.

“You know well, demon girl.”

The spiritualist who was using the crossbow slowly spoke. He was looking at her as if he wanted to confirm something.

“Is that so? This much is common sense, isn’t it? Well then...”

Riku was rotating the halberd in her hands. Apparently, from all the spiritualists gathered there, only that crossbow spiritualist had any considerable strength. In other words, if she defeated this one, then the rest didn’t really matter.

“Which family are you from? Depending on which one, I can go easy on you if you want to.”

“Don’t speak nonsense, you little demon lass!”

The crossbow spiritualist scowled, and in a low voice, said.\*3

In his hand, he was holding five arrows. Shooting the five of them at once, they flew in Riku's direction. The five arrows were flying like swallows,\*4 cutting through the air. As they were doing so, at that instant of time, they caught fire. They were faster than the last attack and much more precise. Together with the sound of a roar\*5, they were approaching. Once again, as to deflect the fire balls, Riku swung her halberd. But as if wanting to engulf Riku, the five fireballs expanded in size. In a blink of an eye, Riku was enveloped by the flames.

“Hmph, very easy. In front of us, spiritualists of the Bistolru family, demons are only equal to trash.”

The crossbow using spiritualist turned away from her as he snorted.

The spiritualists gathered around him and started to cheer.

“As expected! Worthy of being entrusted the fort by Selestinne-sama!”

“It was incredible! Please teach me how to do that!”

“You are very powerful, really... Eh?”

But the cheering ended there. That last comment which was unnaturally interrupted, rather than continuing it with words, a ear piercing scream was raised instead. Because of that, the crossbow spiritualist and the other cheering spiritualists all quickly turned back.

“So, you are a spiritualist from the Bistolru then.”

A halberd blew the fire away.

From inside the fire, without any wound, Riku's figure appeared. Her military uniform was more or less scorched down, but that was all. She didn't look like someone that had been on fire at all.

“Then, I don't need to hold back. Even though I was thinking about going easy if it was a spiritualist from the Barusak.”



Riku slowly walked towards them. While rotating her halberd, as if she was an envoy of hell, she boldly smiled. The crossbow spiritualist once again loaded another arrow. But it was already too late by then. Kicking the floor, Riku closed up the distance between them in one go. She jumped amidst the screaming spiritualists. Decapitating heads with her halberd, blood splashed around like a fountain. In order to save his comrades, he wanted to use his crossbow, but if he were to shoot it now, he could end up hitting them instead.

“If you were a Barusak, I would corner you to the point you would ask me to kill you. But then, because I would be going easy, I wouldn’t kill you. I would keep you alive and hang you up at that cliff. Because I am kind, I wouldn’t cut off your head until you died. But you are spiritualists from Bistooru, so...”

The spiritualist threw away his crossbow, and instead used his sword, aiming for Riku. His main weapon was his crossbow, but it couldn’t be said that he was bad at using his sword. The spiritualist charged towards Riku. She was using her red armor, but there were still weak points in it. For instance, the joint points of the armor. The armor itself was resilient, but its insides were fragile. Covering his sword in flames, the spiritualist pressed forward with his trained physique. He was aiming for the joint point at her neck. Aiming at the defenseless\*6 Riku, the spiritualist thrust his sword towards her. But...

“I will just kill you like usual.”

The girl covered in blood quickly evaded the attack. The movement was almost like a dance step. Losing its target, the spiritualist that stumbled a bit forward, and Riku, by going around him and getting at his back...

“Goodbye, mister crossbow user.”\*7

...She cut his head off. There was nobody capable of stopping her now. Lifting the head that now had dead eyes high, she gave a smile to the remaining spiritualists.

“Well then, what should I do with the rest of you?”

“Kill her!! We must get revenge!!”\*8

Somebody shouted. With those words pressing them to act, the remaining spiritualists wielded their swords. The spiritualist charging forward with their faces twisted in fear was

perhaps a bit pitiful. In an instant, the place became hell itself.

The blood covered girl butchered the spiritualists one after another while grinning. The time it took was only enough for making the corridor that was previously swept until it shone to become a sea of blood.

“As, as if I’m going to be killed! Let’s run away!”

Unfortunately, there were some spiritualists that were running away.

If somehow those surviving spiritualist; those spiritualist, which were from the Barusak, were able to retreat to their base, it could be said that then there would be spiritualist presence only at the plains.<sup>9\*</sup> But now there were only two people remaining in the fort. One had just been killed, while the other was still running to the exit. If Riku were to discover that he was from the Barusak, that thing she had said before about going easy would obviously only going to be torture. That’s why his only option was to run away.

“Damn it! What, what did I even do to deserve this!!”

Forcing his way through the heavy door, he ran down to the plains, which were located down the mountains. His aim was to get to the general Toudo’s encampment. Not only would he receive protection, but also, he still needed to report about the fall of the fort. Of course most of it was just him wanting to run away, but there was a bit of sense of duty over the need to report what happened remaining.

“No matter how strong that demon is, it can’t be considered an enemy to the generals! Fast, I need to report to them fast!”

He was going down the mountains, and having his skin scratched by going through the trees, it felt like his eyes would get hit by the branches.<sup>\*10</sup> But no matter what, he kept running. He only kept going down the mountain. And then...

“Escapee, one person spotted.”

He was suddenly torn up by sharp claws.

In the place he was hit, he was bleeding. In his fading away field of vision, he noticed that

about forty demons were surrounding him.

“Since he ran away, then would it mean they finished things up at the fort?”

“Warrant officer! The flag of the fort was taken down. It seems that it was settled.”

“I see. Then, let’s go back. Hey, somebody finish this guy. Instead of letting him live with these wounds, it’s better to just kill him already.”

Together with those words, that Barusak spiritualist’s consciousness was cut off.

The fall of the fort wasn’t made known to the spiritualists down in the plains. If they were able to get a report about it, maybe the outcome could have changed. If they were to send someone to check on the fort before going to war, maybe they could have seen the moment the flag was taken down. But both the spiritualists and the demons at the Myuuz castle didn’t think about confirming it. It was as if the possibility itself had been left out of their heads, as if they could only see the enemy before them.

It was very close to having this being an unreasonable concept that prohibited them from seeing the fort.

With both armies not noticing what was going on the fort, the war was going to start.

And the [battle of the Myuuz castle], a war that ended in a historical defeat, was now about to begin.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 15**

# THE BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

The wind of the night caressed her cheeks.

With her head hair being blown by the wind, Riku looked upwards. The flag fluttering at the night sky now wasn't the unicorn and the griffon flags anymore, but the Demon Lord army flag. Riku wanted to use the Dragon Demon Division flag, but right now, she wasn't part of them. With that said, she didn't feel like using lieutenant general Gortoberuk's flag either, so in order to have all parties satisfied, she put the generic Demon Lord army flag. The symbol drawn in yellow color of the Demon Lord army would even with the darkness of the night stand out.

"If it is this much, even from the Myuuz castle they should be able to notice it."

With more or less having the feeling of just finishing a job, Riku stretched herself. With only about fifty soldiers, they were able to take the fort back. With that, the spiritualists located at the plains, which were surrounded by the mountains, had been successfully denied a retreat path. With that, all it was necessary to do was to coordinate to Gortoberuk's moves well and defeat the spiritualists. With all she had done, without doubt she was going to get a promotion.

"L-lieutenant!!"

If she were to get promoted, then she would get to have Leivein praising her. Just by thinking about that, her heart warmed up. Even though she was under a cold weather, it felt to her as if she was in front of a fire place, comfortably sleeping.

"It's a serious matter, first lieutenant Barusak!!"

But because of the hindering voice, the warm feelings flew away to somewhere. She felt the impulse of cutting down the owner of the voice with her halberd, but seeing the troubled face of that voice's owner, she gave up on that. For some reason, a bad feeling went through her heart.

“What happened?”

“A serious matter!! Lieutenant general Gortoberuk’s army and the spiritualists started to move!”

“...They started to move?”

Unconsciously, she ended up repeating what the soldier said.

With Riku recapturing the fort, the situation for the spiritualist and demon sides should have changed. Taking that change in consideration, even though they should have been revising their strategies, without bothering to do that, both started attacking each other. It really made one wonder what they were thinking about.

“I don’t know the details really well but...”

“What is that mustache thinking about?”

Moving very fast, she went to the lookout.

In the lookout, inside a metal basket, a fire was lighted up, dimly giving off light. Under the lookout, there were some demon soldiers gathered, who were somewhat anxious. Some leaning forward and pointing to the direction of the Myuuz castle.

“Hey, that is really bad, right?”

“No, maybe it is something included in their plan.”

“How is the situation?”

As Riku came closer, the group of demons opened up a gap for her to walk through. After responding to their salutes by with her hand, she leaned forward to see the situation. Doing that, she strained her eyes. Amidst the darkness of the night, she was able to see many fires moving.

“They are definitely going for an attack, but... Which of them are they?”

It was possible to know that there were many torchlight moving around. But, whether those were from the demon side or the spiritualist side, she didn't know well. She thought about going to get the binoculars, but unfortunately, it didn't seem she had enough time for that. Riku clicked her tongue.

“Is there someone with confidence on seeing at night?”

“Y, yes. I do.”

“You can see, right? Describe the situation in as much detail as possible.”

He changed places with another demon that was before looking. The demon soldier that had bird eyes narrowed his sharp eyes and started to observe the situation. Doing his job as well as he could, he explained the situation of the battle in detail. With each word he spoke, Riku and the other soldiers gradually became colder and colder. The person himself explaining, as if being afraid of the reality he was talking about, had his voice starting to tremble more and more by each word. Riku tightly grasped her halberd.

“Thank you, that is enough. You keep up watching over them like that.”

Lightly tapping his shoulder, Riku turned her look away from the battlefield.

“Half of you are to remain here. The rest must start making preparations for battle! Quickly!!”

“But what about the horses? If we go down to the foot of the mountain, we won't reach in time.”

“Isn't it fine to just use the ones the spiritualist had been using? There were about twenty of them, right? It's not enough? You have legs, don't you!? The slow ones should ride on horses, and the fast ones go on foot.”

From now on, it was all a question of time.

If they weren't to do something, the demon side would receive a blow they wouldn't be able to recover from. As if to scold herself that was too soaked in the aftertaste of victory, she slapped her own cheeks and started the preparations for battle.

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Unexpected to the people at the fort who were in unrest, Gortoberuk and his soldiers were all calm.

Silently advancing, they had an increasing morale. The horses were going fast, and the foot soldiers were accompanying the pace. Together, the numbers were of four thousand, all going through the night, disappearing amidst its darkness. The strategy they were using was one that the staff officer had proposed; a pincer attack using a bait, and added in to that was the surprise attack they were going to do now. To Gortoberuk's point of view, the plan didn't really need to have any more twists on it. But his staff officer urged against not having them until the end, saying they were necessary as a precaution.

"What do you think about the strategy, adjutant?"

While riding his horse, positioned at the vanguard of his forces, he asked a question to his adjutant, who was riding next to him. Then, the adjutant showed a pleased smile.

"Tonight, they are definitely exhausted. From their capital to here, no matter how fast they forced the horses to go, it would take at least five days. With them moving nonstop for five days without resting and even taking their time capturing the fort, they should have just finished building their encampment, and today, they definitely have their guard down."

"That's right, umu"

Gortoberuk became pleased with the answer, confirming his victory as he touched his prided mustache.

"The adjutant is really a worrywart. Indeed, their leader have come to participate in the



war, but as far as I am concerned, it should be only a fourteen years little girl. I will show her the difference in experience between us.”

“As expected of lieutenant general Gortoberuk. If you are able to take down that lass of a leader, you might get a promotion to general.”

At the beginning, the adjutant was feeling very anxious about the battle, but that anxiety had already faded away. Right now, all what was in the back of his mind was only things related to things after they win the battle. At this dawn, which is about the time when they should have won the battle, Gortoberuk will definitely be promoted from lieutenant general to general by that time. If that happens, he will inevitably get promoted to a higher position. And if Gortoberuk were to give him a hand then, he possibly could get promoted to a even higher position. Normally, it would have been a promotion he wouldn't be able to get even if twenty years had passed, and even so, he might get his hand on it in only one night. Thinking about that, he couldn't calm down.

“Right now, concentrate in the battle in front of your eyes. If you start getting cocky and get a hole in your throat, don't blame me.”

Gortoberuk said half-jokingly. The adjutant, without saying anything, smiled. The soldiers following behind them too happily smiled. A fight that victory was so much visible is something that wouldn't happen often.\*2 All of them were believing their victory as they were going through the darkness.

“Look! It's the spiritualist's bonfires. You guys prepare yourselves.”

The bonfires that were visible from afar were little by little coming closer. Together with Gortoberuk's words, the mood around became tense in one go. Their faces were seriousness itself, as if their relaxed faces from before were a lie. Drawing his sword, Gortoberuk raised his voice.

“Raise your battle cries!\*3 Light your fires! We will annihilate the enemy in their sleep!!”

Their battle cries made the ground tremble. Lighting up their torches, their surroundings became clear all at once. But...

“What!??”

While still riding on his horse, Gortoberuk became speechless. The Bistolru and Barusak troops that should have been spread out there sleeping around the bonfires weren't there. Except for the fires still being there, they had completely left the place.

"What does this mean? The enemy soldiers... There is nobody here!"

"Don't low down your guard! They must be hiding somewhere around!"

Right in the instant the adjutant's got his message across, it happened.

Voices full of ridicule were coming from all the sides. Surrounding Gortoberuk's group, many black shadows stood up.

"Damn it, they got us!!

The adjutant's voice was close to a scream. As if his scream was a signal, the whole spiritualist army attacked at that moment. Raising their battle cries, those voices made the mountains vibrate. Using their silver swords, they charged against the demons. The demons that were taken by surprise by those sudden actions soon were already crumbling down.

Receiving a spear strike, one would fall down from one's horse and be chopped up by the spiritualists. Even if they were to jump back away from there\*5, there would be spiritualists ready to attack around where one would land at. Even if they were to retreat back, they would just get killed. Even if they were to plan to break through them, themselves would be the ones pierced through, and even fighting head on, all it would result in was all of them dying. For the demons, the place had already been turning into hell itself.

But the demons wouldn't just keep silent as they got killed. Cutting down a spiritualist, Gortoberuk raised his voice.

"Don't be flustered! Press on!!"

"We must hold on! We must persist somehow!!"

The adjutant also shouted all the words he could think of.

Right now, all they could do was solely to depend on their plan. All they could do was to wait for the army being led by the staff officer that was following behind them to strike behind the spiritualist encirclement. But even this last ray of hope was brutally extinguished.\*6 The adjutant ended up seeing that scene. While he was trying his best to increase the morale of his allies, he turned back to the direction of the castle, and then he saw an unbelievable scene.

“The castle... It is on fire?”

The castle that he was standing on not long ago; the Myuuz castle was burning.

While periodically crumbling a bit, the Myuuz castle was enveloped by the red fire. The crest on the flag, which was of the Gortoberuk family and represented the third army, was being scorched down black.

“Im-impossible. The Myuuz castle... had already fallen?”

Without fighting anymore, he only gazed at the castle perplexed. And as to let such gap go by, the spiritualists weren't kind enough. From behind, the adjutant had his heart pierced through. The last thing he saw before dying was the scene of a unknown spiritualist exposing the head of the staff officer.

“Shit, we can't retreat anymore.”

Gortoberuk's head was now boiling in rage.

He losing his excellent staff officer and adjutant was like having lost both his arms. But as a leading figure of the Demon Lord third army, part of him was still composed. While he was bathing in spiritualist blood, he was thinking on how to break away from the current situation. Then, he started to try inspire the demons that seemed to have their morale fracturing.

“Don't scatter! Group up as much as possible! The real battle starts now!!”

With his sole voice, the whole field trembled. His voice that had the weight of a leader, although only a bit, it still had some spirit. Swinging his sword, he kept shouting.

“Let’s cut the heads of these cowards as a sacrifice to our ancestors!!”

“The cowards are you, you dirty demons!”

A refined voice that didn’t seem fitting to the battlefield followed Gortoberuk’s words.\*7

Riding on a horse, the one that got in front of Gortoberuk was none other than Selestinna Bistolru. Putting down her crossbow to her waist, she held her slender sword. Looking at Gortoberuk in such way that people would think she held a grudge over him, she gripped the slender sword with more strength.\*7

“For you to do such a thing as a night attack on a fair and square battle is outrageous! You should take back what you said!”\*7

“Hmph, you, who were just about to do exactly the same thing, don’t have the right to say those words!”

Raising his sword, he kept on riding at full speed. Gortoberuk’s bloodshot eyes were aiming at Selestinna without doubt. In order to break through this desperate situation, by all possible means it was necessary for him to take down the enemy general so that the spiritualist side receive a blow to their morale. No matter what, Gortoberuk wanted to get his hands on Selestinna’s head. On the other hand, Selestinna also desired Gortoberuk’s head. To lead the Bistolru family forward, it was a necessary prestige, and besides, it was also for the sake of her loved one.

“Die at once, you little lass!”

“Go back to the earth, you senile old fool!”

Both swords collided to each other.

With her silver slender sword and his crude iron sword, both of them violently exchanged blows. Gortoberuk was getting angered with the silver colored sword that seemed so fragile but just wouldn’t break while Selestinna was irritated at the iron sword that wouldn’t even get a single crack from her blows and started to attack more fiercely. And like that, their duel kept going. Until either side get careless, the swordfight would continue. Such a

thing, both of them understood that.

“Little lass... This is foul play. What is with this sword?”

Gortoberuk provoked Selestinna.

In fact, Selestinna was using her demon banning technique on her silver sword. The power she was using was a hardening technique. Her slender sword now had the hardness equal to the one of a diamond. Not seeing any problem with that, she replied as if he had asked a stupid question.

“Is there a problem for a spiritualist to use demon banning arts? Rather than that, it is your sword that has something fishy. If you are going to complain about my technique, then what about using another weapon?”

Just as Serestinna had said, in Gortoberuk’s sword, there were some mithril mixed in. It was a super hard metal that could only be harvested from a certain ore. Even to Selestinna, who as the head of the family would deal with a lot of money to a certain point, it was an material she rarely would see. Even for the demons, who had confidence in their muscle strength, it was hard for them to be able to handle that long sword Gortoberuk was using. For him to easily handle it was proof of his excelling physical strength.

“I can wait the time for you to change your sword.”

“Hmph, nonsense!”

It wasn’t possible to know when the sword fighting would have its conclusion. But the time for their stamina they were relying on to exhaust would definitely come. The instant Selestinna’s breathing became rough, Gortoberuk didn’t let the opportunity slip by. Warding off the slender blade that was already becoming dull, the sword flew to the air. With that, Selestinna shrieked.

“Ah, such a thing!”

“Since you were that weak, you should have focused on not letting your sword get stolen.”

Selestinna’s sword vanished somewhere far behind from her. She didn’t have enough time

to go retrieve it back. With that, Gortoberuk happily smiled. If he was able to kill her now, the morale of the enemies would go down and the one of his own allies would go up. The situation might lighten up a bit with that. With all his strength, Gortoberuk raised his sword high in order to give her the finishing blow.\*8

“This is the end, little lass!”

“I return to you these same words!”

Selestinna took crossbow that was before on her waist. There was already a bolt loaded in. Previously, he had raised his arm high, and therefore, his chest got completely defenseless.

“Damn it!”

In a rush, in order to evade the bolt, he tried to pull back his horse. But that arrow was shot almost from point-blank range. The bolt that was shot blew off Gortoberuk’s right arm. With a faint sound, his arm, still holding to the sword, fell to the ground. Right in that instant, the arm was stepped on by the horse, becoming crushed to an atrocious shape. While covering the bleeding remaining part of his arm with his hand, he groaned in a low voice.\*9

“You bastard... For you to have used a crossbow...”

“Did you forget that the spiritualist from Bistolru specialized in using archery?\*10 And also, was there even a rule saying that you can’t use crossbows at war?”

While saying that, she loaded up another bolt. Without being affected by the movement of her horse, she quickly aimed the crossbow at him.

“This is the end, Rudogar Gortoberuk”

And with that, she pulled the trigger.

Traveling through the air, the bolt went straight towards Gortoberuk’s forehead. With only one hand, it was impossible to properly handle the horse, and he didn’t have a sword to repel arrows anymore. All Gortoberuk could do was to watch the approaching arrow that was already right in front of his eyes.

“You damnable lass!!”

Together with his shout of resentment, right when he resolved himself over his own death...

“So this kind of situation is how it would be... “by a hair’s breadth”?”\*11

Right in front of Gortoberuk’s eyes, something red cut in. The dull sound of the arrow being repelled reached Gortoberuk’s ears. Somehow, it seemed the reddish thing protected him.

“This is... A halberd?”

It was a blood covered halberd. The halberd that previously blocked him from the bolt slowly distanced itself from his face. Selestinna was now pointing her crossbow at the other person rather than Gortoberuk. Following Selestinna’s gaze, he ended up letting out a voice of surprise.

“Yo-you!”

That person leaned the halberd onto her shoulders.

The person was wearing a blood covered armor and showing a bold smile. The halberd wielding soldier looked at Gortoberuk and lightly saluted him.

“From the third army, first lieutenant Riku... It’s been a bit late, but I completed my task and came to report.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 16**



# **.THE RED HAIRED DEMON**

“Wha, you... Why are you here?”

Gortoberuk was greatly surprised. His shocked eyes were looking at her, alternating between Riku herself and her halberd. By his looks, it seemed that he still didn't get a grasp of the situation. While still giving a light salute, she went through her report indifferently.

“The transportation of materials was successfully completed. On the way, there was those unpleasant spiritualist flags set on top of the fort, so I snapped them in two before coming here.”

“Snapped them in two? ...Do you mean that you recaptured the fort?”

“That's impossible!”

Selestinna raised her voice enough to be close to a scream. Putting down the hand that was being used for saluting, she looked at Selestinna's direction. Because of the out of the expectation developments making everything confusing, the hand Selestinna was using to hold her crossbow started to tremble a bit. With that, it was impossible for her to take aim properly.

“But I left there the ace of the Bistolru family, you know? There is no way for him to be taken down by something like demons!!”

“But it is the reality.”

Riku lightly rotated her halberd. With the blood that was stuck to the blade dripping away as she did that, a bit of the blood flew and stained Gortoberuk's prided mustache. But he didn't get angry. He only kept looking at the scene dumbfounded while still holding the stump of what was left from his arm. \*1

“Good afternoon, Selestinna Bistolru. Are you ready to die?”

“Ggh, if you get too cocky, I will make you suffer for that.”( っく )

Selestinna narrowed her eyes. Reloading her crossbow with a bolt, she aimed at Riku. Looking at her acting like that, Riku couldn't help but do a bitter smile.

“How stupid.”

As if she had forgotten that previously Riku had defended against her prided crossbow shot, she shot at her one bolt after another. All which Riku had skillfully deflected. Strangely, all the bolts would fall to the ground without being damaged. Whether it was the quality of the bolts or Selestinna's power, it wasn't possible to know. But to Riku, such thing didn't matter at all. More than that, seeing that Gortoberuk was still showing no reactions made her start to see him in a bad light. After not knowing how many bolts has it been anymore, Riku decided to quit waiting and directly ask him.

“Lieutenant general Gortoberuk, please, give me the order. Whether it is to annihilate all these trash that dared to attack the Myuuz castle, or whether it is for us to retreat to the fort.”

With these words, Gortoberuk finally came back to himself.

Gortoberuk then slowly checked the situation of the battle. From the castle, flames were arising, and the flag had already completely burned down. His adjutant, staff officer and half of the elite troops he personally led were already dead. The demons that were being led by Riku were already giving all their effort, but they still weren't in enough numbers. Just as he was about to think about the situation, he tried touching his covered in blood mustache, but then remembered that one of his arms had been blown off. While giving a bitter smile, he gave Riku the order.

“...I used to not trust you.”

“...”

“That's why, first lieutenant, if you really are loyal to the Demon Lord army, then get the head of that girl that stole my arm. Once you get it... You can go back to the fort.”

Saying only that, he held the reins with his remaining hand, and then, he shouted in an ear piercing loud voice.

“All troops, retreat to the fort! This is a top priority order!”

Gortoberuk’s angry voice resounded through the whole battlefield well.

Turning his back from Selestinna, he retreated towards the direction of the fort. If they were to keep up this fight, complete annihilation would be inevitable. If they were to get annihilated, then retreating was first concern.

“Wa-wait up there!”

Selestinna couldn’t just let that run away. In that instant, she changed target and started following after Gortoberuk. But Riku didn’t let her get her way. Swinging her halberd with great force, she took down a bolt Selestinna had shot at her. In order to keep hindering her, Riku got in her way with her horse. Then, Selestinna gave Riku an annoying look.

“Get out of my way, you lowly red head!”

“Which one of us really is lowly, Bistolru pig?”

To get another bolt, she extended her hand to the quiver. Unfortunately for her, there were no bolts remaining. She had used all of them. The sword had been blown far away and although she still had her crossbow, she didn’t have any bolts to use. The head of the Bistolru household, Selestinna Bistolru, didn’t have any other ways of fighting remaining.

“S-such a thing.”

“You didn’t have enough prepared for the battle, right? Then, goodbye.”

Riku swung down her red halberd. But the blade didn’t reach her neck. In order to stop Riku, a great amount of arrows came from the side. Riku didn’t have any choice but to change the course of her halberd. With her halberd, she deflected the arrows that were raining down on her. While she was still defending from the arrows, Selestinna turned around to another direction and started to retreat.

“Wait, you pig!”

“We won’t let you! Protect Selestinna-sama!!”

The ones that shot arrows from the side were spiritualists from Bistolru. There was no way they would let their family head die. With expressions that seemed like they were ready to die if necessary, they kept shooting at her. Even if she tried to go after Selestinna, with their attacks, it was impeding Riku from being able to follow after her. Riku clicked her tongue.

“What a pain.”

Riku stopped defending from the arrows. After pulling the reins with full force, she charged after the group that were shooting at her. Going through the rain of arrows, Riku readied her halberd.

“Shoot, shoot! Shoot until it is dead!!”

“I won’t die that easily.”

Different from Selestinna’s arrows, the arrows they were shooting only held ordinary demon banning power. Defending against only the ones that seemed they would hit a vital point, she ignored the rest of the arrows. It seemed some arrows had hit her horse, but she didn’t have the time to care about that. All she did was keep charging at full power. The distance between her and the group of archers was rapidly closing up. Riku felt like the rate the arrows were being shot increased, but it was still within her expectations.

“S-stop shooting! Switch over to your swords!”

Thinking Riku was already too close, the spiritualist ordered. If the distance was any closer than that, they would start having friendly-fire problems. But by the time the spiritualists were ordered that, it had already been too late. By the time he uttered his last word, Riku had already reached right in front of their faces. Humming through the wind, the halberd cut the archers to pieces. Once she got there, the conclusion was decided in an instant. \*2Riku was slaughtering one after another, driving the archers to annihilation.

There were some spiritualists that barely managed to throw away their bows and wield their sword. But even so, the result didn't change. Her halberd would mow down everyone without mercy. There were some that were aiming for her horse rather than her, but before they would get close enough, they would already have been cut in two.

The Myuuz territory was drowning in a rain of blood. Aiming at the last remaining spiritualist, right when she was about to raise her halberd...

“Stop it there, red haired demon!”

A voice came from behind Riku.\*3 After killing the last spiritualist, she slowly turned to the direction of the voice. Right there was the figure of Selestinna, who should have already ran away. Together with her, there was an old soldier that felt somewhat familiar to Riku.

“You really came here to get yourself killed, Selestinna Bistolru.”

“Came here to get yourself killed? It's wrong. I came here to get revenge for my comrades that you killed.”

Selestinna readied her sword. Maybe because she got her sword back, any signs of uneasiness she had before faded away. Surprised, Riku shrugged her shoulders.

“Can it be that you thought just because you have a weapon, you could win?”

“Haaaaa!!”

Raising her voice, she charged at Riku. Whether it was the anger of having her comrades killed, the anger of letting Gortoberuk run away or the anger of being underestimated, or even all of those mixed together, it was unknown. The silver sword violently descended upon Riku.

“Such short-sighted attack.”

With her halberd, she kept defending her seemingly roaring swordplay. Sometimes she

would parry, sometimes dodge. From each time she did that, gradually Selestinna started becoming even more enraged.

“You, how dare you!”

Being controlled by her own anger, her blows were more powerful. But, in contrast, she started to do wider movements. Riku didn't overlook that. By the time the flaws in her swordplay were starting to become obvious, Riku had already seen through it.

“Yes, and with that, it's over.”

The moment Selestinna had lost her breath, using the power of her whole body, Riku brushed Selestinna's sword away. With the same level of strength that Gortoberuk had used to take her sword away from her hand previously, there was no way for her to withstand that blow. With a dim sound, her sword flew away to the air.

“Eh...?”

“There isn't enough anger. To be more accurate, there isn't anger imbued on your sword.”

Riku calmly caught the falling sword. The silver sword was Just like before, she didn't have any bolts left in her quiver. There weren't any allies to save her. Even the old soldier that had been there all the time didn't show any signs of moving to help her. This time, her destiny was set.

“Goodbye, Selestinna Bistolru.”

“N,no... Help me...”

To who she was directing those words, in fact nobody knew. After what was to happen, she wouldn't be able to finish her words.

“Unfortunately, help isn't coming.”

With the silver sword, Riku cut her head off.\*4 Because of the fear of death, Selestinna Bistolru died with her eyes still open. Stabbing the head that fell to the ground with the

sword, she was about to leave the place. She didn't have any business remaining with this battle after all. All she had to do now was just complete Gortoberuk's task by going back to the fort.

But...

"Wait!"

A somewhat familiar voice came from behind. It was the old soldier that came together with Selestinna. The spear wielding old soldier was looking at Riku as if to confirm something. Except for him, there were no spiritualists in the surroundings remaining. Before, Riku had wondered whether he was her attendant or something, but thinking how he didn't save her from dying, it seemed he was something else in the end. While she was thinking about who the old soldier in front of her was, he calmly took off his helmet.

"It has been a long time, Riku Barusak ojou... Or rather, Riku, the traitor."\*5

Riku then noticed the old soldier's true identity.

And then, she remembered. The ones that attacked the Myuuz castle weren't only spiritualists from the Bistolru family.

"Toudo Barusak. To think you would be here."

The old soldier was a spiritualist that served the Barusak household for many years. The forgotten memories from ten years ago were rapidly coming back. Toudo used to pass by the Barusak residence often times. But other than that, she didn't remember anything else noteworthy. At most, all she knew was that he made his name through many wars.

"The Bistolru head had said about a red haired demon appearing before. Thinking about the coincidence, I came here to confirm, but... Are you really planning on paying back your father's benevolence with this?"

"Benevolence? There was no such thing."

While leaning her halberd on her shoulder, she started thinking. She was able to handle the halberd with only one hand easily, but she had the feeling that fighting Toudo with only

one hand would be hard. If she was to fight him, she would rather use both hands, but she couldn't just throw away Selestinna's head.

"The benevolence of how he had been raising you for the entirety of seven years and the gratitude for sparing you too. It's very deplorable..."

"Deplorable?"

But she didn't have the option of running away. With this Barusak senile old man spouting nonsense, she needed to end his life already.

"Even though he dropped his own daughter from the cliff?"

"Ah, it couldn't be helped back then. But it seems we ended up creating a mad dog instead. Very well, this Toudo will dispose of this disgrace of the Barusak."

Toudo sighted. With his face full of wrinkles twisting, he pointed his spear directly to Riku's direction. Riku also pointed her halberd to Toudo.

"That's just perfect. I will make you end up just like her."

On Riku's face, her expression was turning into one with an unnatural complexion of ecstasy.



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 17**

# **.WALTZ OF THE TRAITOR AND THE GENERAL**

Riku's fight against Toudo was very back and forth.

Both weapons were cutting through the air, clashing against each other. When Riku's halberd seemed to be about to reach Toudo, his spear would defend the blow. And when Toudo would thrust at her with his spear, she would parry it. Without either the halberd and the spear stopping to move, both kept earnestly exchanging their techniques. Unfortunately, the situation was a bit unfavorable to Riku.

"What's the matter, traitor? Your breathing seems to be getting rough."

Toudo blurted out these words to provoke Riku. But Riku couldn't deny them. There were three reasons for her to be in disadvantage.

First, for the past two days, she hadn't slept.

After she gained control of the fort, even if she was sleepy, there was no way she could have gone sleep. She took one night to send the present, and by the time she was able to get to the fort, it was already about to become nightfall. During that, she climbed up a mountain, got rid of the spiritualists and without being able to rest for too long, she was already going to battle. With all that, saying that she wasn't tired would be a lie.

The next one would be that she couldn't use one of her hands.

With her right hand, she was carrying her spoil of war. Obviously, more than using a halberd with one hand, a blow would have more power when using it with both hands. She wanted to put it down somewhere, but here it was the battlefield. There was nowhere to put it down. Normally, she would throw the head into a sack, but because she was in hurry to depart, she ended up forgetting about bringing it.\*1

And at last, it was the horse.

This horse that had been stolen from the spiritualists did hang on really well through the battlefield.\*2 Because of that, it was possible that it was actually one of good breed. But even so, the horse had received fatal wounds. He had received the arrows rain the Bistolru spiritualists had shot onto them. Having been hit at the head and at the sides, he was bleeding out from several places. Even if it ended up collapsing at some point, it wouldn't be strange.

"You will be able to keep barking only for now."

So she had said, but it being almost like a bluff, Riku was considerably being cornered by him.

The more she were to prolong this battle, more would it be disadvantageous to her. In order to finishing it up already, it would be best for her to throw away her war spoils and use both of her hands. But if she were to do that, it would go against Gortoberuk's orders. If she were to bring him discontentment, it would lower Leivein's reputation since he had given his recommendation on her. This was something she definitely needed to avoid.

"I give these same words back to you."

Touido came with a spear thrust. While parrying one attack after another, she was desperately forcing her brain to work. Touido was very calm, after all, in his spear, there weren't any really out of ordinary power infused on it. An spiritualist that had made his name as much as Touido, would definitely be very powerful and his techniques would be very well polished. Since he wasn't showing this much power, it was obvious that he was just playing around with Riku. As she clicked her tongue, she swung her halberd up, but her blow was defended by Touido.

"Your aim is faltering. Are you getting tired?"

"No, I'm just fine."

Riku's halberd just like that gorged itself onto the side of Touido's horse. While raising a loud shriek, its organs were spilled out of his body. And with that, it slowly started to lose its speed. The lights of the horse's eyes were gradually fading away. Until the horse completely stopped breathing and crumbled down, it was only a question of time. After that, all she needed to do was to aim for the moment Touido would fall down from his horse.

“I see, you were aiming for my mobility from the start.”

Toudo gave a baleful look to Riku. But that was all he could do. Even though the situation of the battle started to incline towards Riku, Toudo was for some reason able to calm down. Perhaps it came from his experience from many wars.

“But you know, this is my most cherished horse. There is no way it will die in a place like this!!”

After he rebuked Riku, light started to come back to the horse’s eyes. Once again putting strength in its legs, it regained its speed. It actually looked like it had become even faster than before. It wasn’t like he got his wounds healed up. Rather, a greater amount of blood was flowing out of his wounds. Being out of her character, Riku ended up opening her eyes wide at the scene.

“Didn’t you know? Really good horses will always answer to its rider’s demands... Even if exchanging its life for it is necessary.”

Even costing its own life, it would respond to its owner’s orders.

With his words, Riku ended up making a gap in her guard. Toudo wasn’t an old general that would let this chance slip by.

“It’s the end, traitor.”

Toudo’s spear hit her horse. While shrieking, the horse reared with its two legs. She started to slip down from her horse. Like that, she felt she started falling down from her horse. Whether it was all good luck, without Toudo being able to deal a deep wound, the horse regained its posture and kept running. But... What would be following after that was unknown.

If she ended up falling from her horse, there would be no way for her to win. Riku clicked her tongue.

“...It can’t be helped.”

Riku made her resolve.

Throwing away the sword she was holding with her left hand, she held the halberd with both hands. Her precious war spoil was still skewered at the sword, but she could go pick it up later. In that place, there was only Toudo and herself. She didn't need to worry about somebody snatching her prize from her. With that, she was able to calm down.

“Go die, Toudo. Shriek like a pig.”

With both of her hands, Riku swung her halberd. Toudo prepared his spear to defend from the blade that had an increased speed. But this time, the tranquility finally vanished from his face. Because of the very heavy attack, Toudo couldn't block it well. Receiving the blow, his arm made a very familiar sound. It was enough to make one think that the attacks from before were only a breeze.

“G,ghn!” (ぐ、ぐぬう！)

“No, that's not how it is.”

The more Riku swung her halberd, the more heavier would her next attack be. Toudo desperately tried to fight back, but. In contrast to Riku being able to recover her breathing, Toudo's breathing was starting to falter. And at that moment, Toudo started a demon banning technique.

“Obediently die like a little bug at once.”\*3

Time had suddenly become slow to him. The experienced general Toudo had activated his technique at a bad timing.

Her descending halberd, while raising a bizarre sound, fell down onto Toudo's head. He hadn't been able to compete with that speed and power. With his spear being snapped into two pieces, his helmetless head split open. Beautifully split from his head to his torso, Toudo Barusak fell down from his horse.

“Even though I was looking forward to corner him just like he had done to me... I guess I lacked the ability.”

Getting down from her horse, Riku took half of Toudo's head. It was somewhat disgusting, but by bringing it back, she could prove that she had defeated the veteran general. Taking away the head off the sword, in its place, she stuck Toudo's head instead. Grasping Selestinna's hair, she calmly went back to her horse. But her horse had already reached its limits.

"I see, this child died."

That horse had died while still standing. While still bleeding, it stood motionless in that position. At one glance it seemed to be alive, but it wasn't breathing anymore. While gently brushing the dead horse, she sighed. She couldn't use Toudo's horse. Thinking about going back to the fort on foot, she felt a bit depressed, but without being able to think about any way to get her hands on a horse, there was no way out other than walking. And right at the moment she pointed her foot to the direction of the fort...

"I finally found you, first lieutenant Riku Barusak!!"

From the direction of the fort, she saw somebody coming.

It was sergeant major Roppu Nezaarand. With his long rabbit ears fluttering with the wind, he came on his horse.

"What's the matter, sergeant major Roppu Nezaarand?"

"Because you were too late, lieutenant general Gortoberuk told me to pick you up... Hey, isn't that Selestinna from the Bistolru and Toudo from the Barusak!? You managed to defeat them?"

Roppu immediately leaned forward by the surprise. Surprised, he alternately looked at both heads.

"That's right. But, I will end it here. I'm tired, and my horse became useless."

"Ah, if that's the case, then please use this horse. Even on foot, I can still keep up the pace well enough."

Getting down from the horse, he gave his place for Riku to ride on.

Mounting on the horse, she looked back once more to Toudo's dead body. Once again, she started to think on how he was someone that had the surname of Barusak, but as expected she didn't feel anything.

"First lieutenant, let's go back quickly. Sooner or later, spiritualists looking for Toudo will come."

"...You are right. Let's go back to the fort."

Riku rode her horse to the fort.

And the girl dyed in red, with her hair of the same red color fluttering with the wind, she disappeared in the darkness of the night.

With that, the Myuuz castle battle came to an end with both sides having very big losses.

The main cause of the defeat for the demon side was because of their failed night-attack.

And more, with the reinforcements that should have come from the castle being brutally intercepted without even having the chance to fight back, the staff officer was killed. As the result, the Myuuz castle was burnt down and Gortoberuk's adjutant perished as well. Gortoberuk himself also lost his dominant arm and his longsword, and Gortoberuk's division of the third army became crumbled.

But there weren't only bad things. Because first lieutenant Riku Barusak recaptured the fort, the spiritualists were successfully locked up inside the Myuuz castle. The winners from the battle were the spiritualists, but they became isolated. The mountains surrounding Myuuz weren't a place humans would be able to go through without a guide.

Adding to that, their side lost two exceptional commanders. Furthermore, one was the head of one of the families in the field while the other was a veteran general serving the

other family.

If looking only at the fact the spiritualists captured the Myuuz castle, it would be said that it was their win.

But if one were to look at how they lost two exceptional commanders and were locked in the Myuuz castle, it was the demon's victory.

After that, when both armies would confront each other... To what conclusion all this would result.

That, nobody knew yet.



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 18**

# ROOK BARUSAK

Rook Barusak was reclining on his chair.

Sorting out the stockpiled documents, he gave out an exhausted breath. The maid Mary, who was always next to him attending to his necessities, had gone out to the market, so she wasn't here today. For the first time in a while, Rook was able to enjoy his time alone.

“Now that I think about it, I'm already fourteen years old.”

While overhearing a tumult happening at the main street, he suddenly got nostalgic.

Rook carried his previous life's memories. Somehow passing for the university exam, he drank to the point of being bathed in alcohol, so he didn't have memories on these last moments. That's why at first, he thought he was dreaming a dream he had become a baby, but without showing any signs of waking up, he grew up. After one year, he was able to get used to all that and accept that he reincarnated in a game world.

“Uhh, what was the next event?”

Rook extended his hand to the table's drawer.

Removing the padlock, he took out some old papers. On them, there were words written in Japanese. From the moment he became able to hold a pen, he wrote down all the events that were going to happen. For the residents of this world, it was like the future itself was written in there, but because it was written in Japanese, nobody would be able to read it. In fact, the servants thought they were only scribbles.

“Ah, that's right, it was that. This one is the most important event, so I need to properly do the arrangements. But before that, there is Seles-chan's confession event, right?”

Rook let out a broad smile. It was the heroine that had the air of an important figure, his childhood friend Seles. It wasn't to the point of being his favorite in his previous world, but it was close.\*1

“I can’t wait...

...Rather, it’s not time to be daydreaming. I need to start the preparations for the next event, or the world will truly be destroyed.”

Putting away the papers, he gave out a long sigh. In case this event ends up in failure, regardless of which route he were to choose, it would lead to a bad end. The route Rook chose was the one that he would capture as many girls as he could; it was the harem end, but depending on this next event, all this would crumble down. Now showing a serious face, he started the arrangements related to the next and most important event. But there was someone that kept hindering him.

“Ro- Rook! It’s terrible!”

Without even knocking the door, a small shadow came running. It was Rebecca, a young girl that was being hunted by slave hunters at this city Rook had come to. After saving her without difficulties, it became that he would be taking care of her until she was able to live on her own. But actually... There was a route that she would be together with Rook for her whole life, and this one was the route Rook was aiming to advance through.

“What’s the matter, Rebecca. For you to be in such hurry...

“Selestinna-san, she... She was!”

Speaking while sobbing, she came to Rook and hugged him. When she came running, her wheat braids came a bit loose. As Rook was hugging her small body, he frowned. In the game, there shouldn’t have been scene where Selestinna would get into trouble at this stage.

“But, but... I don’t want to believe it, but...”

“Rebecca, calm down. There is no way Seles would lose that easily.”

While Rebecca was still talking, this time, Mary came rushing into the room. Mary’s face was unnaturally very pale. While cuddling Rebecca, he became perplexed by the development that didn’t happen in the game.

“What’s the matter, Mary?”

“It’s very important, Rook-sama. Selestinna-sama and Toudo-sama, who were participating at the capturing of the Myuuz castle, have both perished.”

“Wh-what did you say!?”

The impact was as if he had been hit with a metal rod with full force. The route in which Selestinna died indeed existed. However, it wasn’t at this timing, but only after the story had developed more. Rook unsteadily sat down on his chair.

“This you are talking about, are you really certain about it?”

“But, we even saw the coffin.”

While saying that, with her eyes wide open, Rebecca had a great amount of tears flowing down from her eyes. Leaning his elbows on the table, he put his hands on his head. This development didn’t exist in the game. As if inflicting the finishing blow, Mary continued with her words.

“It seems the demons even had stolen her sword... All we were to recover was her battered body.”\*2

“How...could it be?”

Rook was trembling. Because of his sorrow over Selestinna’s death and his anger over this unreasonable situation, he couldn’t stop trembling. Being worried about Rook’s condition, Rebecca cuddled close to him.

“Rook... Are you crying? Will you go after revenge?”

Revenge.

While nodding to Rebecca’s words, he firmly held himself back. He certainly wanted to get revenge. The cute Selestinna that had that tsun\*3 and imposing personality, and from time to time would show an embarrassed smile; for the demons who made her die, he

wanted to make them suffer twofold.

But right now there was something more important than that.

“Thank you Rebecca. And also, Mary... Can you two leave me alone for a little?

“But...”

“Please.”

As Rook muttered that word in a depressed tone, the two of them both looked at each other with a pained expression. Rebecca kept standing there as if she still had something to say, but she had her back pushed by Mary with her head hanging down.

“Understood... If you’ll excuse us, Rook-sama. Now, Rebecca, let’s go.”

“Yes... If Rook says so...”

And then, still showing signs of hesitation, they left the room. Still in his room, Rook was once again alone. The ambiance of the room that now had become silent was quickly becoming heavy. As if to break away from this heaviness, Rook raised his voice.

“Why, why did Seles-chan... Was it because I did actions differently from the game? Now, what am I supposed to do now! Without Selestinna, what do I do about the next event!!”

Rook’s voice was resounding, full of grief.

Rook was self-aware that he had strayed a little too much from the game main character’s actions. Administering his territory that even had his long gone elder sister Riku’s part added to it day and night, the soldiers and the people gained prosperity. Because of that, he ended up meeting some heroines at timings differently from what they were supposed to be. He wondered if Selestinna’s death was also because of his actions. Of course, while there were differences on when he had met the heroines, the situations remained very similar to the game. That’s why he couldn’t have imagined that by these actions, he would trigger Selestinna’s death.

“If I don’t investigate where things went wrong... No, before that... Yes, it alright. After I get through the next event, I can deal with that. At that time, I will be able to more or less guess who was the demon that killed Seles-chan.”

Bit by bit he regained his calm composure. After he deeply breathed three times, Rook took out his papers. And then, he drew two lines over where it was written [Seles-chan confession event].\*4

“I’m sorry. I promise... That I will definitely get revenge for you.”

Rook shifted his eyes to the next event.

What was written down there was:[Contact event ①]. Relying on what his next steps were going to be, the bad ending was approaching moment by moment. Selestinna was a character that was required for that event. He would be meeting a character during his date with Selestinna, but because the essential Selestinna was now gone, he had no choice but to choose somebody else. But he could only wonder which heroine he should use in Selestinna’s place. While thinking all this, a man that had black wings landed behind Rook, who still had his hands on his head, without making any sound.

After looking at Rook’s writhing back with interest for some time, the shinigami whispered in a small voice.

“I guess it is still not time.”

He said.

The moment the shinigami had whispered, Rook suddenly felt a chill. Putting the papers down, he immediately turned his head back, but there was nobody there. Only, on the complicatedly manufactured carpet there were many black feathers left behind. It was as if there had been a crow or something around there a few moments ago.

“It’s only my imagination, I guess?”

While holding a black feather, Rook muttered with mixed feelings.\*5

He still didn't know. He didn't know that the one who killed his beloved Selestinna was actually his sister.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 19**



# SUSPICION

At the Myuuz castle, many cheers were being raised.

Because the spiritualists burned down the castle, they lost the food supplies there. Adding to that, losing two capable generals and being under a situation where calling for reinforcements was difficult, it was very obvious that their morale declined. Because Gortoberuk's third army had received reinforcements and now was with numbers greater than the double they had had at the start, there was no way for the spiritualists to have survived from the demon side's attack. The castle once again had the Demon Lord army flag fluttering at its top and within its scorched insides, many spiritualists' worthless corpses piled up.

The one with the most achievements at this battle was the first lieutenant Riku Barusak. She had recaptured the fort, which had become their base now. And not only that, she also killed two of the enemy generals. But even so, the figure of that red haired girl was nowhere to be found. The reason why she hadn't participated in this last fight was a very simple one. It was because right now she...

"I've said this many times already, didn't I? I didn't betray you."

"I don't need excuses. Just tell the truth."

It was because right now she was confined in the interrogation room.

The beginning of all that happened one day ago.

Since she had gone back together with Roppu, during all these days, she had always been training. Without being summoned by Gortoberuk, together with Vrusto and her other subordinates, from morning to evening, they had been training without stopping.

But at that night... An incident had occurred.

At that night which everyone was sleeping, a sentry had spotted suspicious shadows.

There was no way he could have ignored a group sneakily passing through the mountains. Some of the spiritualists, who were carrying some sort of coffin, were able to escape, but even so, they were able to capture most of them. When they noticed they couldn't fight back anymore, they killed themselves, but the few people that thought losing their life would be too unfortunate blurted out all the information in detail. And so, because of it, Riku was thrown to the interrogation room.

"Just because these guys were spiritualists from the Barusak, this is simply jumping to conclusions."

Riku was bit by bit becoming unable to hide her irritation. Since last night, the situation didn't make any progress. As she gave a deep sigh, she glared at the hateful interrogator.

"In first place, whether it is about that night attack or anything else, there would be no way for me to know. It must be another person."

She didn't know how many times had it been, but once again, she repeated the explanation to the interrogator. Logically thinking, at most, the fact Riku wasn't the traitor should have been clear. But like he had always done, once again he shook his head. He also had his reasons to suspect Riku.

"But from the information we've gathered from them, they said that they had been guided through the forest by a female demon soldier that had a small stature."

The interrogator also started to become unable to hide his irritation. The sound of him hitting the table was much louder when compared to the first time he did that.

"There are people other than me if it is to the extent of being a female soldier! And besides, didn't the people you caught forget the color of her hair. Something like that is impossible. For them to not remember my hair color."

With her finger, Riku was playing with her hair. She couldn't imagine there being people

that would forget about her red hair, which would stand out even with darkness of the night.

“It seems that the traitor was using a helmet. They simply didn’t see the hair. Now, just confess already!”

“As I said... There is nothing to confess, nor anything else; I’m completely unrelated!”

Riku hit the table with all her strength. Because she didn’t hold herself back on her anger when she hit the tablet, it broke down while raising a loud sound. The object similar to a cup that was on the table fell to the floor and broke into pieces. Because of that, water spilled over Riku’s and the interrogator’s feet, forming a puddle of water, but both didn’t care about that. They were both giving out sparks to each other. If they were allowed to bring weapons in, then maybe they would have already started fighting. It was just how much full of tension the interrogation room was.

“If you don’t intend on telling the truth, then I can still ask your body directly, you know?”

“Torture? Even if you go torture an innocent person, you won’t find the true culprit, didn’t you know?”

“You have quite the self-confidence in your statement there.”

“I didn’t do anything after all. Rather, if I were to find any Barusak, I would be the one torturing them.”

Riku said with a calm expression. In fact, she wanted to torture Toudo before, but because of her lack of ability, she didn’t get the chance to. She needed to get stronger to the point she could go easy on others next time. That’s why she wanted to immediately go back training. Even so, Riku didn’t seem like she was going to try run away from the interrogation room. In fact, all she was thinking was how and in what way she should be cornering her enemies.

The situation was completely not progressing. And right at the time the interrogator started to think about actually torturing her, the door of the interrogation room opened and the figure of a man appeared. As this man who had a magnificent mustache cleared his throat, the tension that could explode at any moment calmed down a bit. The interrogator, who had been coming closer to Riku before, gave one step back and saluted the man.

“Thanks for the hard work, your Excellency, lieutenant general Gortoberuk.”( お疲れ様です)

“Umu, good job doing the interrogation. Sorry, but could you let the two of us talk alone?”( うむ)

The interrogator became overturned by Gortoberuk’s request. There was no way he could allow the general of his own army and a suspect of treason talk together alone. To express his objection, he was about to open his mouth, but Gortoberuk stopped him by giving a sign with his hand.

“If she wanted to cause me harm, she would have shown her true colors at the battle. That’s right... When the noon bell rings, come to my room. Do you understand?”

“...Ha, understood.”( はっ)

Glaring intensively at Riku, he left the room.

“...I wanted to ask once, but why did you not throw the name Barusak away?”

Sitting down in the chair, Gortoberuk calmly asked. Looking at Gortoberuk’s eyes, without much anxiety, she answered him.

“If I were to change the surname of Barusak to another one, when another turmoil just like this one happens, people would start being suspicious.”

In the end, if she were to change her surname, people would suspect whether she was just trying to hide her origin. If that was what was going to happen, it is more convenient for her to just call herself Barusak. Hearing Riku’s answer, Gortoberuk nodded.

“Names are very bothersome. Because of your surname and your race, your accomplishments end up overshadowed.”

Gortoberuk indifferently told her that. It made one wonder where his usual himself full of might disappeared to. Perhaps at the time he had lost his dominant hand, he had left that

behind together with his arm. As she was thinking about that, Gortoberuk suddenly started talking again.

“By all your achievements, your promotion has been decided. From now on, you can call yourself captain Riku Barusak.”

“Yes, understood.”

“Umu, your next duty has been assigned. You will leave the fort and start working as a bodyguard for the Demon Lord’s imouto-sama.”(imouto=younger sister)

“Bodyguard, you say?”

Charlotte, who was the Demon Lord’s little sister should have had her own exclusive bodyguard corps. Something such as disregarding them and needing to have Riku as bodyguard couldn’t be thought as something natural. Seeing Riku being perplexed, Gortoberuk gave a faint smile.

“Charlotte-sama will be secretly going on a trip. But if she were to be always surrounded by stern-faced guards, she wouldn’t be able to enjoy her long awaited trip. That’s why it was requested of you, who are a young girl, to work as her bodyguard. What? I’ve heard that the place you will be going to is very safe. You just need to accompany her from a certain distance and prepare for unprecedented situations. Therefore, unless by some chance any danger approaches Charlotte-sama, it’s fine if you don’t do anything in particular.”

“Then basically... It’s fine if I just stay next to Charlotte-sama at all the times. That’s what you are saying?”

“That’s right.”

In other words, all of this was in reality nothing more than a vacation.

Being suspected of being a traitor, it would be hard for Riku to keep living in the fort. Until all this commotion cools down, she should go rest somewhere else, or so would be the case. With all that said, Riku saluted Gortoberuk.

“Thank you very much, lieutenant general Gortoberuk.”

“I will be personally looking for the real traitor. ...From now on, I will be looking forward to your performance... Immediately start the preparations for the trip.”

“Yes, understood.”

After she lowered her head to Gortoberuk, she was about to leave the room.

But from Gortoberuk’s expression, it felt like he still had something to say. She was a bit uncertain if she should ask him what it was about, but since he had told her to go start the preparations for her next task, she decided it was better for her to leave the room once and for all. Lowering her head one more time, she left the interrogation room.

Inside the interrogation room, only Gortoberuk alone remained. He looked at the place his right arm used to be. Regretfully touching the part where it was cut off, he muttered to himself in a small voice nobody would have heard.

“...Perhaps, I will need to pass the seat to the junior generation soon.”

He said.

The old general shut his eyes. Under his eyelids, the image of Riku swinging her halberd full of power was being reflected.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 20**

# THE FESTIVAL AT DERUFOI

The Derufoi city was a city overflowing with liveliness.

Despite the cold weather that seemed it would start snowing, the main street was crowded with people. And what's more, each person walking there was showing a smile. Whether it was the street stalls or shop windows, all was brilliantly decorated. The merchants using varied colorful masks and mantles would raise their voices, full of energy. As Riku looked at her surroundings with deep emotions, the little girl walking beside her let out a smile.

"It's your first time being to this kind of place, isn't it?"

With her face buried in her muffler, the girl whispered to Riku.

In reaction to the girl's question, Riku showed a wry smile. In these ten years, whether it was training or going to war, all she had been doing was only either of those things. Even before that, she wouldn't really leave the Barusak residence. She remembered participating in the festival promoted by the royal capital, although to Riku, it was a memory she didn't like.

"That is true... I've never been to places of this kind too much."

"What, captain, you are wasting your life. Listen, from now on, I will teach you how to have fun."

Saying that, the girl pulled Riku's hand. The girl advanced through the crowd of people as if she was already used to doing that. As the girl was walking, her blonde hair that was tied in twin-tails would be moving left and right at her back. At one glance, it felt she was a bit like an ojou-sama from some rich family, but the girl wasn't just an ordinary ojou-sama. While holding her hat that felt like it was falling off her head, Riku whispered next to the girl's ears.

"Um...Is it fine for Charlotte-sama to not use a hat?"



Her two magnificent horns located a bit above her ears were like they were a hair ornament, but they were clearly real horns and could be argued they were inhuman. After Riku asked her that, Charlotte gave a mischievous smile.

“Look your surroundings with more attention, captain. At this town, there is nobody worrying about my horns. After all, the day after tomorrow is the festival.”

“Festival, you say?”

“That’s right. It’s a costume festival! Look, there are also other people already hasty for the festival.”

Charlotte’s thin finger pointed straight to a crowd of people. Looking where the finger was pointing at, it was possible to see there was a boy wearing a headdress of a cow and a girl wearing fox gloves playing with each other. It was possible to see other people also wearing costumes now and then. Most likely, Charlotte’s horns were being mistook for it being only a costume.

“I see... That’s why you chose to come to this town?”

“Although there are other reasons as well. Hey, let’s go.”

Charlotte went running full of energy straight to a shop stall. No matter how one would think, her appearance was only of a normal girl. While wondering if she was really born more than two hundred years ago, Riku followed after her. Looking behind, it was possible to immediately see that there was a group that was following them and was checking their situation at the back-alley. All of them were wearing the same long hood and were armed with swords. It was most likely Charlotte’s personal escorts Gortoberuk previously talked about. They looked almost like a group of kidnappers. Thinking about that, a memory she didn’t really want to remember surfaced in her mind. Trying to take those memories out of her mind, Riku averted her eyes from them.

“Captain, what are you taking so long for? Come quickly!”

“Yes, Charlotte-sama.”

One by one, Charlotte was checking the stalls; she was happily looking around at the

festival.

While chewing a bird skewer that had Tare sauce\*1 on it, she picked up a pendant she got interested in, which was made of gems that were visibly cheap and had parts coated in gold. Naturally, to her, who would actually use real ones,\*2 there was no way she would buy it, and actually went there only to make fun of the shop.

“It’s fine for you to buy what you want. However, I will subtract the payment from your wages.”

So said Charlotte, but there was nothing she particularly wanted to buy. She thought of buying a souvenir to Leivein, but she didn’t think there would be anything he would be happy to receive from those shops.

“That’s right. If there are weapons or the sort, it might be good to check it out...”

“Haa... Captain, you should forget about things related to war for the moment. Otherwise, there would be no meaning for you to not have brought your weapon here.”

With Charlotte’s response that was accompanied with a sigh, Riku showed a wry smile.

The halberd she had been long using was left at an inn far from the city. Even if the city was crowded with people using costumes, a girl wielding a halberd would be too much suspicious. Therefore, right now, Riku was only wearing clothes a normal girl at a town would. If danger came towards Charlotte, all she needed to do was to defend her with her bare hands. The demon banning arts didn’t have effect on Riku, and if she were to buy enough time, the escorts that are tailing after them would do something.

“Understood, Charlotte-sama.”

Sounds of different timbres were resounding throughout the town. Before the festival, the town was this much lively already, but when the actual festival starts, it should liven up even more. Putting her hands that seemed to be becoming numb by the cold in her pocket, she walked next to Charlotte, somewhat behind. And then, putting off finding something suitable to Leivein to tomorrow, she started to consider buying souvenirs for Vrusto and her other subordinates.

“Hm! Captain, look at that!!”(むっ)

Charlotte stopped in front of one of the stalls.

It was a shoot the target game. There were many prizes being laid there, and in front of them, at the counter, there was a short bow. \*3Charlotte had her eyes glued at a cute teddy bear, which was one of the prices. Absentmindedly gazing at the teddy bear, she looked like a girl in love. Riku became stunned. She was wondering if person that was now that restless over the stuffed toy was really the one leading the Demon Lord army.

“Oh, ojou-chans! Won’t you come play shooting the target?\*4 It’s three copper coins each try.”

As the stallholder looked at Charlotte, his eyebrows loosened.

After thinking for a few seconds, she firmly pulled Riku’s sleeve.

“Captain, It’s an order. Shoot down that target.”

“...Isn’t it fine to just buy a teddy bear similar to that one?”

“It’s not! This is a fated encounter!! If it’s not that one, then it’s not the same!!”

“...”

Too much surprised, Riku became unable to say anything.

She once again wondered whether that selfish girl really was the one leading the whole Demon Lord army. Flustered by such doubts, she held herself from putting them into words. If she were to pick ill intent now, Gortoberuk, who had recommended her... Didn’t really matter. But Leivein, who had recommended her to Gortoberuk, would get part of the bad reputation. She mustn’t let Leivein’s evaluation go down because of her.

“Hey, captain! Quickly, shoot it down!”

“...Yes.”

The target was small and seemed to be a bit hard to hit. Even with that said, it wasn't that she didn't have experience using a bow. By using three shots, she should be able to hit it. Riku leaned down and was about to get the bow.

But...

"The ojou-san there, could I go in your place?"

The bow her hand was about to hold was taken by someone beside her.

"Eh? Bu-but even if you get it, I won't give it up to someone like you! That bear is mine!!"

"Yes, of course. I just wanted to give you a hand. Besides..."

The boy shot the arrow. Flying through the air, it hit the target right at the center.

"Oh, a great hit! It was very amazing, onii-chan. Here, take it."

The stallholder gave the teddy bear to the silver haired boy. Receiving the teddy bear, the boy gently gave it to Charlotte.

"Yes, it's this one, right? The special teddy bear you wanted."

"U, umu. I-I won't say any thanks."\*5

Charlotte's cheeks blushed.

Hugging the teddy bear, this time she had her eyes glued at the silver haired boy.

"Hm? Is there something in my face?"

“There is no such thing! Mo-more importantly, where did you learn how to use the bow like that? I saw you did it very skillfully.”

As she asked that, the silver haired boy hung his head down. From Riku’s angle, she couldn’t see the boy’s face, but she felt an unpleasant feeling spreading in her heart. Riku immediately took Charlotte’s hand and intended to leave this place, but Riku couldn’t move. As if the world had stopped, she couldn’t move from that place.

“Yes, I learned it from my childhood friend... She used to be much better than me.”

“Used to be, you say?”

Noticing his use of past tense, she inquired about this point within the reasonable limit. As if he was feeling hatred about something, the silver haired boy raised his face.

“Yes, she is... Already dead. At the Myuuz castle battle, she...”

A single tear fell from the boy’s eyes. Charlotte glanced at Riku for an instant. She was showing a face of someone that seemed to want to say something.

The possibilities were very limited on that crossbow girl being his childhood friend. There were very high chances of Riku being the killer. Although there was somebody that had a connection to someone she had killed right in front of her eyes, she didn’t feel anything in particular.

More than that, there were no doubts that this childhood friend of that archery expert who participated at the Myuuz battle had connections with the spiritualists. As Riku was winking, trying to make an eye signal, Charlotte opened her mouth.

“...Do you have resentments for that?”

“...I don’t know. But I think it would be better for this miserable thing to end already.”

“Miserable?”

As if the message of Riku’s winking did not reach her, Charlotte kept talking. Riku was

preparing herself to kill that person who had connections with the spiritualists at any moment. She was only waiting for the order.

But Charlotte didn't show any signs she would be giving any orders.

"Yes. I think it's miserable how the spiritualists and demons fight, washing blood with blood."

The boy was muttering his conviction. As if Charlotte had been captivated by it, she was attentively listening to his conversation. Riku suddenly got the feeling they should get away from here as soon as possible. Thinking this decision must be the correct one, she patted Charlotte's little shoulder.

"Charlotte-sama, soon we should..."

"Captain, I want to talk to this guy. Sorry, but can't you step aside?"

Riku was amazed by Charlotte's declaration. She wanted to be together with that suspicious spiritualist alone. She didn't know what was going to happen to Charlotte from now on, but she had the responsibility of dealing with any unexpected incidents, and so, in turn, it would be Leivein's responsibility. From anything that could happen, only that she needed to avoid at any costs. Riku was desperately persisting.

"But, Charlotte-sama!

"How insistent! This is an order! If not, then what, captain..? What would you be scheming by defying my command?"

Charlotte was glaring at Riku. During that moment, the escorts that should have been following both of them from behind tried to hold her down. It was a great amount of strength being used at her, but it was still to the point of her to be able to easily shake it off.

"Let me go!"

Riku put strength into her arms. Shaking them off was easier than twisting the arm of a baby. However, when she was able to get free again, Charlotte's figure was already

nowhere to be seen.

...She had already gone together with the silver haired boy she was talking to before.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 21**



# .SWEET COFFEE

Riku clicked her tongue.

Both Charlotte and the silver haired boy completely disappeared inside the crowd of people, making Riku lose her sight of them. But even so, there was no way they could have gone too far. If she go after them immediately, there is no mistake she will be able to find them in time. Riku started running after them in a hurry. Her instincts were telling that she mustn't let the two of them be together. It was clear that that boy had connections to the spiritualists, and Charlotte, who led the Demon Lord army, was a person of the highest importance. If Charlotte's identity was discovered, it wasn't possible to expect what would happen then.

But as if meaning Riku wouldn't be allowed to proceed, a escort kept standing in her way.

"Wait a second, what is all this about? Is it fine to leave the two of them alone?"

"Charlotte-sama must be thinking of something. Thinking much exalted thoughts that are unimaginable to us."

The escort declared with a serious face. She got so angry over that declaration the blood in her head felt like it would start to boil. If she had her halberd at hands right now, perhaps she would have ended up cutting the escort's head off. Alleviating that increasing rage by having a long breath of air, she glared at the escort.

"Exalted thoughts? Right... Let's say it is just as you told me. If that's the case, then whatever happens with all that, it is none of my responsibility."

Declaring that, she had the feeling she took a weight off her shoulders. Turning away from the escort, she decided to go back to the inn.

The only person that blocked her way was the single man standing there. The rest all followed after Charlotte. Since that was the case, her duty was over. She was now going to enjoy her vacation without needing to escort someone or do anything else. But stopping

her, the escort caught her arm.

“...What?”

“It seems that you don’t understand Charlotte-sama’s plan. Since it can’t be helped, come with me for a bit.”

The escort pointed to a coffee shop nearby. It was a stone built coffee shop that had a very calming ambience. There was a sign which had the word [Open] and the menu written on it.

“Sorry, but I’m not in a mood for that.”

“Well then, Riku Barusak... What is your rank?”

“...Right now I’m a captain.”

“I’m a lieutenant colonel. It seems my rank is higher than yours. Come with me. That’s an order.”

She didn’t have any options.

With the same feeling as if the escort that proclaimed to be a lieutenant coronel himself was dragging Riku, she unwillingly entered the coffee shop. As if he was already familiar with it, the lieutenant coronel ordered two coffee cups and sat down in an empty seat. Inside, it was moderately filled with people, and had even some people wearing costumes having fun talking among them. But there was nobody that minded the costumes. Rather, the waitress herself was wearing cat ears and had false fangs, having fun with her own costume.

...If it was that coffee shop, maybe even if she didn’t wear her hat, it would be fine. After she sat down on her chair, the lieutenant colonel cleared his throat.

“Umu, well then... Once again, let’s do self introductions. I am Keity Foster. From the first army, which is led by Charlotte-sama, I serve as the lieutenant coronel of the imperial guards. I would like to show my thanks to captain Riku Barusak for undertaking this task.”

Lieutenant colonel Keity Foster gave a bow with his head.

Riku ignored about half of what he said , but by what she heard, she suddenly had a bad presentiment. As expected, she hesitated to talk about it personally.

Lieutenant colonel Keity Foster was a demon that had muscles worthy of the position of being an escort. His arm was thick and covered in tiger fur, but even so, by looking at them, it was very well possible to notice he was getting tense. No matter which angle one would look at him, it was clear he was a man.

Noticing Riku's confusion, Lieutenant colonel Keity Foster gave a wry smile.

“Yes, you too got the wrong idea. With this appearance, it can't be helped I get mistaken so often, but I'm a woman. Since I've been born for as long as I've been living, it has been like that. Really... Originally, in the Foster family, it's very common for our physique to become like that. My mother, elders sister and little sister, all are often times called “macho women”. ...Well, although they bring hell to those people.”

Keity told her story as if she was already fed up by telling it many times. But such a thing didn't really matter. It was common to have women like Riku serving as soldiers in the Demon Lord army. As long as one was able to get achievements, whether it was a man or a woman didn't matter. Even with that in mind, because Keity kept talking, Riku wasn't able to get the opportunity to say anything.

“Did you know? Not long ago, I've been stopped from going to the women's section of the bath. And also...”

“Thank you for waiting. Here is your coffee.”

As if to pour water onto Keity, who was tediously complaining about her problems of the disparity problems of her appearance, the waitress came with the coffee. The obsidian colored liquid was giving off steam. Finally, for the first time, Keity shut her mouth and started to blow her coffee to cool it down. In order to repress her gloomy mood, Riku did a long breath. And then, before Keity would start drinking the coffee, Riku hurriedly began to talk about the main question.

“Now... What kind of thoughts would Charlotte-sama be thinking?”

“Ah, yes. It was about that we came here to talk, wasn’t it.”

Apparently, Keity had forgotten about that somehow.

While scratching her head due to the embarrassment, she gave a quick look at the surroundings. And then, lowering her voice by one level, she started to talk.

“At the Derufoi city, there is an area that is prohibited for people to go in. Did you know?”

While putting a sugar cube in her coffee, Riku started to recall about the geography of the city.

On the map she was given in advance to coming the place, there was a big “X” symbol on a certain area. She didn’t think too deeply about that, but she assumed what Keity was talking was about that.

“More or less.”

“Then, it makes it more simple. In that area, there is a shrine. Making contact with the Shibira shrine located there was in fact one of Charlotte-sama’s secret objectives.”

“Shibira?”

“It’s the temple of the blind. The people that succeed that name, in exchange for not being able to see the reality, are able to see the future, or so it is said.”

“Future?”

Riku put one more sugar cube on her coffee. The white lump of sugar was slowly sinking down. Mixing it up with a spoon, she easily made the two sugar cubes dissolve in a short amount of time. Becoming scattered in small pieces inside the black liquid, it gradually melted into it. Looking at such scene, Riku felt a feeling that couldn’t really be described with words. Unconsciously, she picked up another sugar cube and added to the coffee.

Looking at how she was acting, Keity twisted her face.

“You don’t believe it, right? Look, it is said that the future the Shibira see are absolute. Knowing the future sooner can be useful for preparing for calamities that are going to happen.”

“And then, be manipulated by that decided future? ...I don’t really like this sort of pre-decided kind of way of thinking.”

Defined future, unchangeable something... This could be said destiny was something that didn’t allow such things to change. But imposing that didn’t feel like a good thing to her. Just because she didn’t have talent, she was thrown away. Just because she was a human, she was always treated as a traitor. Was it really impossible to change things that were decided from the start? Inside her heart, resentment was accumulating. In order to wash it off, she drank her coffee.

“Lieutenant colonel Keity Fostar. Would you follow the future decided by somebody else?”

“But all of that is the truth. In fact, Charlotte-sama’s elder brother... It seems that because he ignored the Shibira’s predictions, he was defeated. That’s why this time, we need to make full use of it.”

“Is that, so?”

“That’s right. But the problem starts now... In order to enter that off limits area, unless you are royalty or a member of one of the spiritualists families, then you are not permitted inside. Shibira’s prophecies are an existence that carries a might which is of great influence after all.

Keity put milk to her coffee. On the black surface of the coffee, a white circle of milk was formed. Seeing how both of them were stirring their coffee, Riku asked Keity a question.

“If that is the case, then how are you planning on getting there?”

“Umu, what the plan was at first was to make use of the confusion of the festival and have one of us escorts to kidnap a Shibira. But having one less person would be a problem.

Therefore, we assigned you to be her bodyguard.”\*1

But they didn't consider the possibility of a plan of having Charlotte getting friendly with a spiritualist. Now, whether it was because he was soft-hearted over her or because he had secret intentions, regardless of what it was, he had a liking to Charlotte without doubt. Using this to her advantage, rather than taking the risk of invading that area, she might be able to get to the Shibira by a legitimate method. That is why Charlotte purposely drove Riku away. Thinking about it to this point, Riku snorted.

“...That's too naive.”

Riku couldn't imagine that Charlotte thinking all of that and asking her to let her be alone together with that silver haired boy. She didn't know the details, but the feelings contained at her gaze when she looked at the silver haired boy wasn't the feeling of wanting to use him, nor some sort of acting to feign harmlessness. It was clearly a gaze of someone that had fallen in love.

Riku drank the remaining coffee at one go. The extreme sweetness completely overlapped the characteristic bitter taste. Maybe she put too many sugar cubes. Pondering about the sweetness, she drank the coffee up and stood from her seat.

“Thank's for the treat, lieutenant colonel Keity Fostar. Now then, I will be taking my leave.”

“Wha-, are you going already? All my tasks were already done once I got you separated from Charlotte-sama. So, won't you enjoy the coffee a bit more with me?”

Ignoring her offer, Riku left the coffee shop.

Right at that moment, the cold of the blowing wind pierced her skin. She buried her face on her muffler and put her hands on her pocket. Then, Riku started walking, having her posture bended a bit forward. Then, by the time she saw the signboard of the inn, the turmoil of the main street had already got distant. As she was thinking on how it was better for it to be this quiet, she saw there was a boy in front of the signboard standing as if he was waiting for someone. He was using a hat and was looking at the surroundings worriedly. Right when the boy noticed Riku's figure, he enthusiastically smiled.

“First lieutenant Riku Barusak! No, captain!”

The boy... Roppu Nezaarand, full of energy, came running like the wind.

“Congratulations for the promotion.”

“Sergeant major Nezaarand, what’s the matter?”

“Y, yes! Actually, I received an order to be transferred to the captain’s squad and came to give my greetings. And also one more thing, which was to give you a letter to the captain.”

From his pouch, he took out one letter. The name of the sender wasn’t written on the white letter. Without even opening it, she just threw it inside her pouch.

“Err... Ah, yes. Captain, please take care of me from now on!”\*2

“Yes. Likewise. Do your best.”

“Yes! I will give my all!! ...By the way, captain Barusak... Uhh, is it fine if you don’t read the letter?”

With a face that showing his shyness, he asked her.

“I don’t feel like reading right now. By the way, who is that letter from? Would it be from lieutenant general Gortoberuk?”

“N, no. It is from lieutenant general Adlar. Since their army were stationed close by, I went there to give my greetings to the fourth army... And so, I was entrusted with giving captain this letter.”

“You should have told me sooner!”

Riku hurriedly took out the letter and opened it. It was the first time she received a letter from Leivein himself. Riku carefully unfolded the paper inside. On that paper, there were several lines of words elegantly written. Indeed, only several. But even if it was only this

many, since they were written for her, she was very happy. But...

“...You’ve done a good job at the Myuuz castle. This time’s task you were assigned to is of great honor. Protect Charlotte-sama even at the cost of your life.” Is it?”

Riku feelings were a bit complicated right now. If it was for the sake of protecting the supreme commander of the Demon Lord army, she would put her life on stake; she was aware of the responsibility. But perhaps... If she had received this letter before she met Charlotte, maybe the feelings she was feeling right now would be different. Perhaps she would be a bit more eager to correspond to his expectations. But unfortunately, she had received the letter after finishing her escorting duty.

“I’m very much sorry... Captain Leivein, it will be difficult to meet these expectations.”

She didn’t have the confidence of being capable of throwing away her life in order to protect Charlotte. No, she didn’t want to protect her at all. No matter how much it was Leivein’s orders, only that was impossible. This Demon Lord substitute that would harbor attachment to a person that had connections to the spiritualists was just a detestable fool. Her heart wasn’t so big for her to care about it. Folding the letter carefully, she put it inside her pouch.

“Now that I think about it, where would Charlotte-sama be right now?”

“I don’t know. She should be having fun somewhere.”

And right as Riku said those words.

“It’s terrible!”

A single man was running through the main street. Many people were gathering, wondering what the man was screaming. Breathing heavily, once the gathered people were looking at him, he said with a loud voice.

“De-demons have appeared!! Just now, at the other side of the main street, the spiritualists were exterminating them!

Immediately, both Riku and Roppu looked at each other. Right now, the only demons that



were at the town were Charlotte's escorts and herself.

"Is this true?"

"It's true! But they said there might be others."

"What did you say!? You are saying that there might be demons hiding in the town!?"

"Yes. They even left alive a little demon girl for getting information about that."

In other words, Charlotte was captured and all her escorts were killed. Riku didn't know until when Charlotte would be able to keep her mouth shut, but she was worried that she would let her existence being known to the enemy. Right now, would it be better to retreat together with Roppu or for her to go save Charlotte?

"Ca-captain. What should we do?"

Roppu was hiding behind Riku.\*3 Even if Riku had red hair, she was still a human. She didn't have to worry about being found as a demon. But if someone was to take away Roppu's hat, his rabbit ears would reveal his identity. If he were to declare it was only a costume, it might still be fine, but if a spiritualist was to check it, he would notice Roppu was a demon without doubt. Maybe that's the reason why Charlotte got exposed as a demon.

It was better for Riku to run away in this situation. Leivein ordered Riku to protect Charlotte, but Charlotte herself refused the protection. There was no need for Riku to go save her. But right when Riku took Roppu's hand and was about to enter the inn...

"But for them to leave one demon alive as a prisoner... Who was the spiritualist that allowed that?"

"Don't you know? It is that famous heir of the Barusak household."

Due to the words that shouldn't have been spoken, Riku stopped her feet.

"The ones that killed all the demons were that heir and some female spiritualists that came

together with him. But when they were about to kill that last tiny demon, he stopped them.”

The heir.

Riku’s memories were being brought back.

It was her younger brother who would coil around her feet when they were still young. From times to times, they would eat sweets and play together. The younger brother who started to talk more adult-like and started to invent strange things after he became four years old. The younger brother whose name was...

“Rook Barusak.”

In accord to Riku’s memories, he had a silver hair that felt it was almost transparent.

And then, there was that silver haired spiritualist who got close to Charlotte. Noticing that, Riku whispered near Roppu’s ears.

“Sergeant major Roppu Nezaarand, with your speed, it is possible for you to get to where Vrusto is in one day, right?”

By being suddenly asked of something, Roppu got surprised. Quickly looking at the surroundings, when he confirmed that the attention of the people around weren’t at them, he whispered back in a low voice.

“It is possible. Since he also received a day off, right now he should be at the fourth army’s garrison... But, why are you asking me that?”

“Isn’t it obvious? With his nose, we will be able to find Charlotte.”

Riku had a smiling face.

It was fortunate that there were Charlotte’s luggage remaining at the inn. Following the smell, it should be possible to know where Charlotte is, and at the same time, it would be possible to determine where Rook Barusak is without mistake. To that feeling of finally

reuniting with her younger brother she hadn't met for ten years, there was no way Riku's heart wouldn't be dancing around.

And besides... With that, it would be possible for her to carry out Leivein's task of protecting Charlotte.

"I can't wait. To think I would be able to see Rook grown up."

Riku was now thinking about what sort of things she should say when she meets him. On that face which was being illuminated by the sunset, she had an atrocious smile.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 22**

# THE ENCOUNTER

After getting back to the inn, she quietly shut herself in her room, without leaving from there for one day.

She would write letters she was going to send to Leivein, check the conditions of her weapons, and just like now, sometimes she would sit close to the window to enjoy the view outside. Leaving the big window open-wide, she would look at the city at night. Right now, Riku was lost in her thoughts.

Looking at the Derufoi city from that height, it was possible to notice that it wasn't a very big city. It was many times smaller than the capital and didn't have the same splendor as Perikka did. The old buildings made of stone would all stand lined next to each other as if all were cuddling together towards the center of the main street. But even with that said, it was by no means disordered, but would actually would give off an harmonizing feeling of antiquity, bringing forth a good feeling. For some reason, as if it was at the eve of the festival, while the other streets were all in dark, the main street was full of lights.

At the ends of the lively main street, there was a deep forest. If one was to strain one's eyes and look, it would be possible to notice there was a small building dimly shining white at the center of the forest.

“Would there be where the shrine where the Shibira are at...?”

Riku gave a small sigh.

The forest where the shrine was coincided with the place an “X” was drawn at the map. But to Riku, this didn't matter at all. The information that Riku needed right now was only the location of Charlotte and Rook Barusak. Other than that, she didn't have any interest.

Grasping the halberd that was next to her, she took off the cloth that enveloped its axe-like blade. Being bathed by the moonlight, the tip of the blade dimly shone. She even thought about practicing with the halberd outside, but there was too much turmoil over the demon invasion. There was no need for her to take the trouble of going outside just to catch

unwanted attention.

“There is not even a scratch on the blade; it can be used anytime.”

Muttering that to herself, she once again enveloped the blade with the cloth.

As it would be expected, Charlotte and her escorts that went after her weren't coming back to the inn. Keity was the only one that did, but with lifeless eyes, she was motionless, depressed at the corner of the room. Before, she was searching around the city, but it seems that in the end, tripped and fell down, fracturing her leg. Since the time Charlotte was kidnapped, one day had passed, and during all this time, she was like that.

“Ah, it's because I wasn't beside her... Because of me that... that Charlotte-sama...”

Repeating the same thing, she looked like she became a doll that would only speak the same set of words.

“Really, you are too naive.”

Finishing enveloping the blade with the cloth, this time she drew the silver sword that was at her waist. The slender blade that would give off a silverly light was a war spoil she got at the time when she killed Selestinna. She didn't really want to use something a spiritualist used to use, but the sensation it gave off when she used it was very nice. As if she had been using it for a very long time, it felt very familiar to her hands, and gave the sensation that just by lightly swinging it, it would slice off the enemy just the way she would desire. Of course, it was inferior to the halberd she had been often using for these many years, but it didn't change the fact that it was a very easy to handle weapon. At places that are too narrow and would make it difficult to use the halberd, this would come in handy.

At spaces such as this room, using the sword instead could be better.

“...Such a noisy night.”

Even though the demons had appeared yesterday, the main street was s. The music from the lively festival was resounding.

Then, it was possible to hear footsteps that gave off a feeling of danger from the corridor, although the sound of the festival was more or less concealing the sound of the footsteps. Riku held her sword tight. The moment Riku walked away from the window, the door was violently opened.

Several men wearing armor entered the room. In an instant, the men surrounded Riku and Keity, holding their sword with a stance which the sword was positioned vertically.

As if to protect Keity, who was completely trembling, Riku stepped forward. And then, the men glared at her with a lot of killing intent.

“Who?”

“We are spiritualists from Buryuccer.”

“We know that you guys are demons!”

“Demons? I’m a human though?”

Even though she told them the truth, they were still glaring at her. Spitting out saliva, one of the spiritualist yelled.

“Don’t play dumb! From our investigations, we confirmed that there are demons staying here!”

“Who told you that?”

“It’s something you would know right away if you look around all the inns of the city!”

Riku gave out a sigh of relief. It seems that Charlotte didn’t blurt out about this place. Since that is the case, she still might be able to fool them. Putting her sword at her scabbard, she intentionally let out a long sigh.

“I’m a human. I’m not a demon. If you think that is a lie, then try cutting me.”

“You think that just by saying that we won’t cut you!? You stupid demon!”

The spiritualists were showing despicable smiles. Then, swinging it upward, the sword grazed at her cheek. If Riku was a demon, her brains would have been scattered around by now. However, Riku was only left with a small cut at her cheek. Wiping off the blood on her cheek, she spoke in a low voice.

“...What am I supposed to do if it leaves a scar?”

With how Riku was really a human, and how they had just damaged a girl’s face, the spiritualists were embarrassed. As if to stab at their uneasiness, Riku pressed on.

“Ah... Uhh...”

“With this red hair I already have a very low chance of being able to marry, but now with this scar... With that, will I remain unmarried for the rest of my life?”

“I-I’m sorry!”

“Sorry? You... You think you can settle everything with only that? Suddenly entering in somebody else’s room and saying that I’m a demon, and you even attacked me. And now with this scar!! This is a catastrophe... Even though this hair is already a disaster by itself.”

With her voice little by little becoming full of sorrow, she started trembling. As if to hide her wound, she covered her face with both hands and went down to the floor.

The spiritualists were looking at one another without knowing what to do. As expected, for how they one-sidedly decided she was a demon and even hurt her, they thought that they did something unforgivable. One of the spiritualists then put a small bottle that had medical cream inside on her hands.

“I- I’m very sorry. It seems that our investigations were lacking. Here, use this medicine. It should heal right away.”

“...Is it true?”



“Of course! We use it for light wounds very often. It should heal in three days.”

“If any marks remain even then, then I want compensation. It is really unforgivable...”

The spiritualists left the room all with pale faces. Riku was still sitting at the floor, but when she was sure the footsteps were completely gone, she raised her face. Her face was one that was as if nothing had happened; a face without a single drop of tear.

Keity timidly spoke to Riku.

“Err... Are you alright?”

“It’s good that you are fine too, lieutenant coronel Foster.”

When it became clear to the spiritualists that Riku was a human, they also assumed Keity was a human too. It didn’t go through the heads the possibility of a human and a demon staying at the same room.

“Leaving that aside, he is too late.”

While clicking her tongue, Riku threw the medicine at her pouch. And right at that moment, a demon with a wolf face nimbly jumped inside the room from the window. Then Riku glared at the demon who was smiling.

“You are late, warrant officer Vrusto.”

“Ah, sorry, sorry. I got a bit busy on the way. That aside, I’ve been promoted to second lieutenant thought?”

As he gave his complaints, Vrusto scratched his head.

“Is that so? Congratulations for the promotion. Now then, the concern right now is that I need you to follow Charlotte-sama’s smell, but...”

“...You called me only to use me as a sniffer dog?”\*2

Riku threw one of Charlotte's luggage to Vrusto. Catching it, Vrusto sniffed it as if it was a pain to do.

“Now, I only need to find where Charlotte-sama is, right? More than that, you... weren't you her bodyguard? How did they kidnap her?”

“...Actually, she ordered me to leave her alone with somebody else.”

“Seriously? But don't you know how the upper brass decides on things?”

Vrusto showed an disgusted face.

It was as he had said. No matter how Charlotte herself was the one that ordered that, she might get the responsibility for not being able to stop her. If something like that ends up happening, at this time, she would present Keity to them as her scapegoat without any hesitation. Riku herself tried to stop Charlotte, but Keity got in Riku's way. The one to blame for all that wasn't Riku. Keity also agreed to do that, but even with that already planned, there was still the possibility of her getting a punishment for collective responsibility due to how she had been entrusted to deal with the unexpected occurrences. She needed to avoid that at all costs.

“That's why I called you.”

Riku didn't care one bit about Charlotte. But if she only cared about killing Rook, even after being able to do that... If there was any chance of her being unable to be together with Leivein because of her actions, then she could only choose one of the choices right now.\*3

“...Is that so, ojou-chan?”

Vrusto was showing a face of someone that wanted to say something.

But Riku ignored it. Picking up the halberd that was leaning against the wall and carrying it at her back, she put her foot at the frame of the window.\*4 Looking at the street bellow her, she saw Roppu waving his hand. As if saying that it was fine for her to go down now,

he did a signal with his hand. Looking at the completely desolate street, Riku sighed.

“Lieutenant coronal Fostar, I have to bother you with taking care of the room while we are out.”

“I understand... I will leave Charlotte-sama to you.”

Keity said in a pained tone. If she was able to move her feet, she would have also joined in the searching party. Feeling the sorrow of the voice that came from her back, she jumped from the window frame.\*5 Landing without any sounds like a cat, she waited for Vrusto to jump down as well. Landing next to Riku, Vrusto stretched out his shoulders.

“So, let’s go, ojou-chan?”

Moving his nose, Vrusto sniffed the smell on the air. And then, he started to walk at a fast pace and Riku followed after him. The three people were walking around the dark city. It was possible for them to hear all the noise of the festival at the main street from there.

“Once you locate where Charlotte-sama is... What should we do?”

Looking at Riku, Roppu asked.

“That’s you role, right? All me and ojou-chan can do pretty much is to go burst forward through the front door. We will rely on you for lock picking the back.”

Before Riku could answer, Vrusto declared in a low voice. Due to that answer, Roppu started trembling.

“Eh, lock picking? Bu- but I don’t know how to do that... Besides, doesn’t it make us the same as robbers!?”

“Stupid, infiltrating isn’t a respectable act either wa... Hm?”

Vrusto’s nose moved, and then he stopped his feet. Right after that, he extended his arm sideways as if he was trying to tell them not to proceed further. Neither Riku nor Roppu knew what was going on, but they assumed he felt there was something strange. Riku

moved her hand near to the halberd at her back.

“Captain Riku Barusak, second lieutenant Vrusto Asuteroid, sergeant major Roppu Nezaarand. I’m not a suspicious person.”

From the sudden appearance, Riku unconsciously got. After putting the axe blade at the neck of that person, Riku raised her eyebrows. The one standing there wasn’t a human. It was a small demon. With her cute squirrel ears moving, she was looking at them with her adorable big eyes. Even though Riku had her halberd next to her neck, that demon had a gentle smile showing on her face.

“I’m called Kurumi Shouru, from the intelligence division. Please, let me help you with searching Charlotte-sama.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 23**

# FOR THE FUTURE

“You want to help?”

Riku narrowed her eyes.

The demon that named herself as Kurumi was showing a gentle smile. That is, even though she had a halberd right next to her neck. If Riku wanted to, that girl would lose her head in one second.

But despite that, Kurumi was smiling. Whether it was the enemy, whether it was anyone else, there shouldn't have been anybody that would show a smile to a blade full of killing intent. Perhaps it was because Kurumi was absolutely certain she wouldn't lose her head, and also had the self-confidence and was carefree enough that she could act like that.

“Yes. I'm also a member of the demon lord army after all.”

Kurumi's voice didn't hold any hesitation. There were no signs of panic. For she to not have any changes at her face even though she was pressed on to this point, maybe being able to do such thing was the reason why she was able to keep up as a member of the intelligence division. Thinking like that, any suspicions would fade away.

But... Riku didn't feel she should remove the halberd from her neck yet. Since Riku remained silent, in her stead, Vrusto spoke.

“Hey, why do you know our names? I can't be helped for you to know ojou-chan's name since she is a human, but I don't think I'm such a famous person for that.”

While exposing his fangs, he was looking at the little Kurumi. Even though Vrusto, who could be said to be a beast, approached Kurumi, who in comparison would be a little animal, she didn't falter at all. Without flinching from his intimidating air, Kurumi politely spoke.

“That is untrue, second lieutenant Asuteroid. I've heard that you were the one who taught

military arts to captain Riku Barusak, who had got many achievements at the Myuuz castle battle. Sergeant major Roppu Nezaarand too. It is spoken of that you slipped through the enemies and were able to inform the fall of the fort. Perhaps you are not self-aware of that, but you are quite a famous person.”

“I-is that so?”

Vrusto scratched his head embarrassed. All the weariness he had before had dispersed and he got softened up.

Riku glared at Vrusto. Then, with all her strength, she hit Vrusto, who had a silly smile on his face, at his flank with her elbow. Twisting his face, Vrusto groaned from the pain and took distance from Riku.

“You brat! What are you doing!”

While rubbing the place she hit, Vrusto was glaring at Riku. Even so, Riku wasn’t feeling any ounce of guilt.

“It’s because you had a stupid face on. That’s all.”

“If you want to talk about stupidity, then shouldn’t it be this rabbit brat!?”

Ignoring Vrusto’s clamor, Riku turned her eyes back to Kurumi. With her adorable big eyes, Kurumi too was silently looking at Riku.

Kurumi was a demon. Her ears were genuine squirrel ears. It was clearly different from the costumes that were being used at the downtown. It wasn’t possible to think a demon would be allied to humans.

But Riku couldn’t trust Kurumi. She couldn’t put into words why she wasn’t able to trust her, but she really had the feeling that Kurumi was hiding something behind her smile.

Whether to trust her own instincts or to trust Kurumi. Riku had only those two choices.

But regardless what she would be going to do, the clock was ticking. By chance, it was

possible that something would happen to Charlotte or that Rook Barusak would leave the town. She didn't have time to waste on thinking.

"I beg you, captain. I'm from the intelligence division, so I can be of use for infiltration. I also investigated where Charlotte-sama is being held captive! But as expected, this time I'm a bit anxious in going there alone so... Please!"

Kurumi spoke trying to pursue the matter.

She still had her smile on, but it was possible to notice signs of desperation on her eyes. She couldn't see then as eyes of a liar. And it was possible to understand her hesitation for infiltrating on the enemy's place by herself. It was a possibility for her to run into the next head of the Barusak once she got close to Charlotte. By looking at Kurumi, it didn't seem like she was very proficient in fighting. If she were to directly confront Rook, she would be killed in less than one second. That's why she wanted to join them. Kurumi's request wasn't really absurd.

But Riku couldn't decide over that. There was nothing strange about her situation, but she still had a bad feeling over it.

While Riku was still pondering about that, Roppu, who had been quiet behind her, timidly stepped forward.

"Err... Captain Barusak, I think it is fine to trust this person. It doesn't seem like she is telling any lies."

"...Sergeant major."

Riku muttered in a low voice.

Just as Roppu said, Kurumi didn't seem to be lying. But there was something behind the scenes. Without doubt, she was hiding something. If it wasn't for that case, she wouldn't be smiling. Even so, she didn't have the time to inquire Kurumi about that.

She was lost and didn't know which choice she should choose. Then, Vrusto whispered next to her ear.



“Ojou-chan, let’s just say we go on with this guy’s proposal.”

“Go on with?”

Roli muttered in reaction. Then, Vrusto continued what he was talking in a lower voice.

“Yes. I will keep up following Charlotte-sama’s smell. If the place her smell is coming from and the place this squirrel girl is leading us to matches, then we can confirm she wasn’t lying. And if there is anything slightly off, then we can know she was trying to deceive us.”

The place the smell is coming from wouldn’t really change whatever it may happen, and so was reliable. If Kurumi wants to deceive them and brings them to a different place, then in this case, she can just kill her for being a traitor.

“I beg you!”

With her forehead to the ground, Kurumi persisted with her request. Giving off a big sigh, Riku made her resolve.

“I... Don’t want to kill my companions and get punished because of that. It will cause bad reputation to captain Leivein after all.”

Riku took the halberd off Kurumi’s neck. Even though Kurumi had been showing a smile, she was very tense after all. Kurumi let out a sigh out of relief.

“Thank you very much. I will do my best!”

“Don’t get the wrong idea. The moment it is clear you betrayed us, I will kill you.”

“Understood, captain. Now, please follow me.”

Kurumi nodded with a smile.

Being guided by Kurumi, Riku and the others were going through the city. After moving

forward for some moment, the tumult of the main street started to get distant. They entered in a quiet residential area. As if everyone had gone out to the main street, there were no signs of human presence there. Riku, who got worried about it, whispered to Vrusto.

“Is it matching?”

“Yes, it is. What’s more, the smell is even stronger. If Charlotte-sama herself wasn’t here, then there wouldn’t be this much smell remaining.”

In the end, it seems Kurumi really knew where Charlotte was.

But Riku still felt a feeling as bad as the feeling of getting a fish bone stuck in the throat. The moment Kurumi turned her head to Riku and said “This way”, it couldn’t be helped for Riku to get concerned about the way she was gazing her. She wasn’t really well disposed about Riku. But even with that as the case, her gaze didn’t hold despise and was a weird gaze.

One word that could describe it would be “hostility”. The hostility her gaze held wasn’t spirited like the one given at the battlefield, and it was also different from the looks she would habitually receive at the barracks. It was a type of hostility that Riku had never felt until now.

She could only wonder what that was about.

“It’s there.”

While Riku was still thinking about that, Kurumi had stopped her feet.

Kurumi pointed to the mansion ahead. Its size wasn’t as big as Gortoberuk’s villa, but even so, it was a mansion big enough for it to feel out of the place from such a small city like Derufoi. There, there was a gatekeeper standing there, being vigilant to the surroundings.

“This is the mansion of the lord that governs Derufoi city. Charlotte-sama is locked in there.”

Riku turned her gaze to Vrusto. After Vrusto’s nose moved, he gave his positive.

“It’s just as she says... Charlotte-sama’s smell is coming from that residence.”

“Is that so... Now, how are we supposed to sneak in there?”

“This way.”

Kurumi pointed out an alley.

After going through the alley with vigilance, they stopped at a dead end. Getting close to the floor, which was covered with stone slabs, Kurumi started to examine it as if she was looking for something. And then, she took out one of the big slabs. At the place where the slab was, there was a hole that was barely big enough for a person to go through. If Riku was using her armor now, she might have not been able to go through. At the hole, there was a ladder, which went on very deeply through the ground. Riku looked at the hole, but she couldn’t see the bottom of it.

“There is a corridor underground that is connected to the residence. We can infiltrate there through here.”

“...Are you sure it really connects with that residence from earlier?”

To Riku’s question, Kurumi affirmatively nodded.

From here on, it might be difficult to rely on Vrusto’s nose. She was a bit worried about it, but she didn’t have the time to be hesitating.

“Sergeant major Nezaarand, for the moment, you stay here. In case anything happens, you should immediately retreat. Then, you should go after lieutenant colonel Foster and follow her orders. Second lieutenant Vrusto should come with me. ...Kurumi Shouru, I will rely on you to guide us.”

“Understood!”

“Yes, yes.”

“I understand.”

Kurumi put her foot onto the ladder and went down. Riku and Vrusto followed her afterwards. They went down the ladder that was cold and solid to the hands step by step. One could only wonder how far the ladder went on. Looking up, Riku saw Roppu looking at the hole with a worried face at the distance.

When they finally put down their feet to the ground, Roppu's figure was only of a dot. Because it was underground, Riku thought that it would be so dark it wouldn't be possible to see even an inch ahead, but it wasn't the case. There was moss growing at the wall; they were giving off a faint light. Because of that, it was possible to see a few steps of distance ahead.

“Even though lightmoss is growing here... It is still very dark. Let me prepare some illumination.”

Right as Kurumi said that, she lighted up a lamp. The faint darkness of the underground corridor became bright in an instant. There was nobody there. She thought about the possibility of somebody laying an ambush here, but it seems that it wasn't the case.

“Perhaps, could it be that... Captain is being suspicious of me?”

Kurumi asked worriedly. Then, Riku showed a wry smile. It seems her face had revealed her worries.

“I'm not being suspicious. I can just kill you if you betray us after all.”

“...That's being suspicious.”

Vrusto muttered something, but Riku ignored it. Kurumi shrugged her shoulders to Riku's answer.

“You are scared, aren't you?”

“Does it look like that to you?”

“That’s right... This way.”

Kurumi kept advancing through the corridor.

The sound of their footsteps resounded in an illusory manner. Kurumi was at the front, guiding them, and glaring at her back was Riku. Behind Riku was Vrusto, which was taking care to protect the rearguard as he was walking. One could only wonder how much time passed then. They had been walking for about one hour, but Kurumi didn’t show any signs of stopping to walk. Without giving too much heed, Riku asked.

“Is it really this way?”

Riku intended to speak in a low voice, but even so, her voice echoed through the corridor. If there were any enemies hiding around, they would have immediately noticed Riku’s presence. But as if completely being indifferent to Riku’s worries, she smiled.

“It’s fine. There is no mistake.”

As if there were no problems, Kurumi turned her way to a different direction. Because how naturally Kurumi had done so, Riku became a bit less worried about it. And following after Kurumi, she also went the same way. And at that exact moment...

“That’s where you will die.”

The exact moment when she turned her way, the faintly dark corridor became overflowed with a very intense light. It was so bright that she had shut her eyes. Despite that, she wielded her halberd. But even so, the consequence of having her sight stolen were big. Right when she thought she felt killing intent from the direction the light came from, an arrow was already right in front of her eyes. She tried to avoid it, but she wasn’t in time. The arrow hit her arm.

“Ojou-chan!!”

Vrusto’s shout echoed. Drawing the sword at his waist, he ran next to Riku. While twisting her face in pain, she took out the arrow. The wound wasn’t as deep as she thought

it was and wasn't bleeding too much.

"I'm alright."

After giving a glance to the wound at her arm, she looked ahead. The light had completely faded away and the corridor had gone back to its faint darkness. Next to Kurumi, there was the figure of a little girl standing there. Her wheat colored hair was tied in braids. The little braided girl was glaring at Riku as if Riku was the one that had killed her parents. Guessing from how she was holding a bow, Riku assumed she was the one that had shot the arrow.

"What you did just now... Was that a flashbang? You can really do it, can't you?"

Vrusto kicked the orb on the floor that was close to his feet. Riku started to slowly rotate her halberd.

"...Then, Kurumi Shouru is a traitor."

"Traitor? I'm fighting for the future of the demons."

Kurumi's smile vanished from her face. What was behind her smiling mask was an expression that looked as sharp as a blade. Without any uncertainties, she was giving Riku a sharp look.

"Future?"

"That's right. For the sake of the future Rook will build, I will swing my blade."

As if she was some kind of illusionist, knives appeared between each of Kurumi's fingers.

"A future spiritualists will build? Are you stupid?"

Vrusto barked in a low voice. Vrusto must be boiling with anger. His fur was standing up and he had his eyes open-wide.

“If that’s the case, then shouldn’t you stop the war already? Aren’t the spiritualists still attacking us?”

“It’s for the sake of having the minimum amount of blood spilled. For that purpose, I need you two to die.”

Kurumi wasn’t looking at Vrusto. She only kept glaring at Riku. It seems that at some point in time Riku got Kurumi to hold resentment over her. As she was trying to remember the time she had met Kurumi, Riku spoke.

“Oh, is it inconvenient for you to have me living?”

“That’s obvious. If Rook knew you survived... He would definitely become sad.”

“Sad?”

Riku blurted in a off-toned voice. Just from the surprise, the halberd she was holding felt like it would fall down. Riku thought Kurumi had misspoken something, but it seems that wasn’t the case. With a serious face, Kurumi declared.

“That’s right. Because, his own sister he thought to be dead is killing her own people... killing spiritualists. Because of his love for his family, it will make him suffer to hold grudges to you...That’s why before he knows of your existence, we will kill you.”

“Rook got very sad because Selestinna was killed. If he knew it was his sister who did it, he would become even sadder. Rook is already full of pain. That’s why I won’t let you make him have more pain!”

Following Kurumi’s words, the braid little girl spoke. It seems that the little girl wanted to kill Riku as well. In the girl’s eyes, flames of anger were burning.

“...So they said. What should we do?”

Vrusto quietly asked. But Riku wasn’t able to answer that question.

“Aha. Ahahahahahaha!”

Instead, Riku started to laugh in a loud voice. No matter how she would interpret it, all that was simply too funny. The two people glaring at her full of resentment and hatred were like two clowns dancing on sloppy moves.

“That guy is full of pain? Sad because I became his enemy? That’s why you will kill me before he knows I survived?”

“Y-yes, that’s right. What’s the problem with that!?”

“There is a problem. I will die from laughing so much.”\*1

Riku didn’t miss how they gave one step back. Calmly, Riku was gradually closing the distance between them.

“First, about the female pig. If he has so much time to be sad, then he could have simply not let her go to war in first place.”

Riku put herself on his place and started to think. In a battle, if she were to survive, but Leivein were to die, rather than being sad over his death, she would blame herself. That would be because she wasn’t capable of protecting him. More than holding a grudge, she would regret of her own powerlessness.

“If he didn’t want her to die, it would have been better for him to keep her at a cage. All this is pretty much that his beloved bird he was raising got shot down by some hunter. The hunter was only properly doing his job. The bird simply wasn’t able to run away.”

“Selestinna-oneesan isn’t a bird!!”

The braid girl drew her sword. Infusing her power in the sword, it started to become enveloped with water. Even though she was young, her power as a spiritualist was already flourishing.

“Kurumi-oneechan, that person is weird. We definitely can’t let her meet Rook!”

“That’s right, Rebecca. We will tidy up this mess ourselves.”



Kurumi lightly patted the head of the braid girl she had just called Rebecca.

Riku noticed there was a ladder just a bit behind Kurumi and Rebecca. Somehow, she had the feeling that ladder would lead them to where Rook was. Riku leaned her halberd on her shoulder.

“Second lieutenant Vrusto. Let’s make them covered in blood.”

“Stupid. Even if you don’t tell me, I was planning on doing that.”

Vrusto already was wielding his sword.

His tone of voice was just like his usual, but even so, it still held a bit of anger. From Riku’s point of view, she noticed he was holding his sword with more strength than usual.

“Let’s get through this and get outta here, ojou-chan.”

“While carrying their heads, right?”

She couldn’t imagine Rook being sad if he knew she was alive. He probably would get angry instead. There was no way Rook, who was leading the “proper” life at the prestigious Barusak household, wouldn’t be thinking about the sister that was thrown away that kindly.\*2 He would probably want her get a death penalty after how she killed that spiritualist head in cold blood and pointed her blade to her own family.

“Well then, shall we begin?”

For the sake of depriving Kurumi and that braided girl of their future and making Rook Barusak fall in despair.

Lowering down her stance, Riku slowly licked her lips.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 24**

# HAVE YOUR MOUTH SHUT FOR ETERNITY

The first to go forward was Rebecca.

Raising her water covered sword, she charged at Riku. Riku defended the attack by parrying it in accordance to the orbit of the blow with her halberd. With her stance broken, Rebecca staggered a bit, and Riku wouldn't let this chance go by. Riku swung her halberd upwards.

“N-not yet!”

Making the water that was enveloping the sword take the shape of a shield, she positioned it to protect herself. It was a shield that was made solid by compressing the water. But such didn't matter to Riku. As if she was cutting paper, the halberd was cutting the water shield into pieces.

It would be good if she maintained the pressure until. But things wouldn't end that easily. Just barely, Rebecca, who was at the other side of the shield, barely regained her posture.

“What!?”

“What's the matter? Is all you've got only this much?”

As if having her shield destroyed being something regrettable, Rebecca twisted her face. She inflated her cheeks and glared at Riku.

“Uu... This stupid girl! Die for Rook!!”

Like a surging wave, she once again attacked Riku. If she was able to practice for ten more years, maybe she would have been able to become an exceptional swordswoman. But Rebecca was too young right now. As if she left her body to her anger, she kept

swinging her sword. More than anything, there were many flaws in her swordsmanship. Although each of her strikes were full of power, by then, Riku had already seen through it.

“Is that so? Then, go die.”

To the battle that was more boring than she expected it would be, Riku let out a sigh.

Rebecca became panicked and tried to take distance by jumping back. However, Riku didn't let her escape.

“I caught you.”

After she got right next to Rebecca, she held her down. Holding down both of her hands with her left hand, Riku pressed Rebecca down with her right foot at Rebecca's chest. Just like that, using her weight of her whole body, Riku pinned her down. Groaning, Rebecca tried to get away, but it only ended in futile resistance. Riku looked down at Rebecca with uninterested eyes.

“Goodbye, young spiritualist-san.”

Riku raised the halberd she was holding with her right hand. Rebecca was still struggling, but as if she had noticed something, she opened her eyes wide and stopped her struggle.

“It's a shame, onee-chan.”

In reaction to the out of place smile, Riku's hand stopped. She frowned, puzzled.

“What?”

It was right at the instant she said that. Two knives Kurumi had thrown were flying through the air. The knives that were thrown at a speed comparable to arrows were rushing to her defenseless back. Because she was using her left hand to hold down Rebecca's arms, she couldn't use it, and by the time she could turn her halberd behind her, the knives would have already hit her back. If she got away from Rebecca, it was possible for her to evade the knives. However, in exchange, Rebecca would end up being set free. Perhaps at the instant she were to release her, Rebecca might attack Riku with her sword.

“Bye-bye.”

Rebecca slipped out a smile.

But the knives didn't reach Riku. The knives that seemed they would hit Riku's back were deflected. With a metallic noise, the knives fell to the ground in vain.

“Hey, it would be a problem if you forget I'm here.”( おっと )

The one that protected her back from the knives was Vrusto. And after that, he swung his sword aiming for Kurumi.

“Sorry, but your opponent is me.”

“Tch, get out of my way.”

Like a illusionist, she threw her knives at Vrusto as to disrupt his pace. While lightly deflecting the knives with his sword, he was gradually closing in to Kurumi in a steady manner.

“Stupid. Is there even anyone that would get out of your way just because you said so?”

With his sword, Vrusto slashed at Kurumi. And then, her arm was cut off and flew to the air. After raising a high-pitched cry, she groaned. With blood spraying off from her arm, the blood fell to the ground, taking a shape that looked as if there were many red caterpillars.\*1

“Ku-kurumii!!”

Under Riku, Rebecca was screaming. Her face didn't show the anger or the smile from before. What it was showing right now was fear. Looking at such Rebecca, Riku clicked her tongue in discomfort.

“That voice; it's too annoying.”

“N-nooo!! He-help me, Ro-...”

Rebecca wasn't able to finish her words to the end. With her halberd, Riku cut off Rebecca's head. Her wheat colored hair was now dyed in blood. Without caring about the hair being soaked in blood, Riku picked up the head.

“Have your mouth shut for eternity.”

Saying only that, she looked at Vrusto's direction. Kurumi wasn't able to hold a sword any longer. Even though she still had some things similar to grenades hidden, because she didn't have arms anymore, she couldn't use them. Without her being able to resist anymore, finishing her off was easy. But Vrusto didn't kill her yet.

”Really, what are you doing?”

After glaring at Vrusto, she lightly swung her halberd, sending Rebecca's blood that was at her halberd flying. She was going toward Kurumi, who was doing her drama at the ground.\*2 But Vrusto stopped her.

“Don't kill her, ojou-chan.”

“...What are you talking about?”

She wondered if she had heard correctly. Because she had been together with Vrusto for these ten years, she knew his personality. Vrusto should have been angry at Kurumi's actions. That's why she had no idea why Vrusto still didn't kill her. Riku pointed the axe-blade of the halberd towards Kurumi.

“This is one is guilty, you know? Didn't she by herself declared she had connections to Rook Barusak and also tried to kill us? Or what? Is it because she flattered you that you don't want to kill her?”

“Stupid, there is no way it is that.”

Vrusto plainly declared. His eyes were unusually cold.

“Try to think. This guy is from the intelligence division. There is a need to investigate what information she leaked to the spiritualists or whether there are other traitors around.

“That...It is like that, but...”

Riku hanged her head down a little.

She understood what Vrusto meant.

Kurumi wasn't a spiritualist, but from the demon lord army. And what's more, she was from the intelligence division, which worked with varied secret information. In result of the leaked information, that recent battle took a complete different shape from what it should have been. And besides, there might be other demons that has connections to spiritualists besides Kurumi. It wasn't Riku's job to meddle in this case, but the job of an interrogator.

“...But if she is going to die anyway, then it doesn't matter if she dies here.”

Riku muttered while biting her lips.

She just couldn't leave a demon that had connections to spiritualists, and moreover, to the Barusak, alive. Even if she were to mow her down, smash her and cut off all of her limbs, it wouldn't be enough.

But even Riku knew she shouldn't do it.

“Control yourself, ojou-chan. Taking this guy prisoner is for the sake of the army... For the sake of captain Leivein.”

Vrusto put his hand at Riku's shoulder. He was putting a strength that felt like his claws that would often be used to cut people would sink in her skin. It was as if he was straining himself to hold an unbearable anger back. Vrusto also must have wanted to kill her right away, but he was desperately enduring it. Riku quietly looked at him.

“...That's right. The information she leaked might affect the captain in the future.”

“That’s the case.”

After Riku lowered down her halberd, Vrusto released his hand from Riku.

“Then, after we deliver this guy to Roppu, let’s rethink on our plan to invade that residence.

Vrusto went back to his usual tone of voice. Riku was finally able to wholeheartedly agree with his suggestion.

“Now that I remember, I’m actually a bit worried where that ladder goes to...”

“Is that so? But let’s go back for now.”

“Also, since it will be a pain to carry her, shouldn’t we also cut off her legs?”

Upset about the situation, she looked at Kurumi.

“...k...Do.”

Perhaps because it was hurting so much, she was mumbling random things out of pain. Because it was too muddled, it wasn’t possible to know what she was saying.

“Yes, that’s right. But, shit, I completely forgot. Stop her bleeding. If she ends up dying, there would be no meaning to it.”

“I know that.”

Riku approached Kurumi.

After she got close to her, she started to hear more clearly about what she was mumbling about. Riku was very annoyed by that. While she was hoping that Kurumi would lose her consciousness, right at the moment when she was next to her...



“...I will do it. For Rook... will. ...For Rook’s sake, I will kill everyone.”

Riku noticed. She saw that inside Kurumi’s clothes, there were many explosives attached closely to one another.

“That’s bad!”

A bad feeling went through her. Because Kurumi didn’t have arms anymore, there were no signs of her activating the bombs. But there was still the possibility of something unexpected happening. Throwing away her halberd, as if to get away from Kurumi, Riku pushed Kurumi away from her.\*3

“I’m sorry, Rook.”

But Riku was one step late. While having tears flowing from her eyes, she clenched her teeth. In that instant, crossing both of her hands to protect herself, she received the shockwave. But this much wouldn’t be enough. Right at the moment she prepared to be sent flying by the explosion, everything was already over.

All sounds had been drown out by the thunderous explosion and white light completely covered her eyesight.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 25**

# .VERMILION WORLD

Under the cold weather with the sky full of twinkling stars, Roppu Nezaarand was leaning forward.

Timidly looking at the entrance of the underground corridor, he was eagerly waiting for Riku and Vrusto to come back. Since they had gone in there, a good amount of time have already passed. But even so, there were no changes to the residence where Charlotte is at, nor there were any signs of them coming back.

“Uu... I wonder if they are alright. Maybe... It might be good if I go in too? But it goes against the orders.”

Roppu was indecisive.

It would be weird if he were to go at the place Riku and Vrusto were invading. His hearing and leg strength were excelling even within the demon lord army. But he couldn't follow after smell just like Vrusto could. There wouldn't be any marks remaining so that he could reach to them and he didn't feel like he would be able to follow after them by himself.

“I guess I should wait a little more so I can think about what to do.”

It was right at the moment he let out a sigh.

Suddenly, the ground shook. After a thundering sound similar to the one of an explosion, there was the sound of something crumbling down, both coming from the entrance of the underground corridor.

“Eh, eh!?”

Roppu looked at the entrance in panic. But unfortunately, it was too dark, hence he couldn't see anything. Guessing from the sound from before, it didn't look like what crumbled down had actually been something around him.

But because something had crumbled down, there was a high chance that Riku and Vrusto were in danger. Unsteadily, he was giving a few steps back.

“T-this... I need to report it to lieutenant colonel Foster!”

Roppu ran through the path they had took to come there before. This case was an “unexpected incident”, which was what Riku told him to be attentive to. Because they got involved in a problem, he needed to let a superior officer to be aware of it. Taking much less time than the amount they took when they were being guided by Kurumi before, Roppu got back to the inn.

And then... He became speechless of the scene happening in front of the inn. The stone floor there was dyed in blood. The air was filled with the smell of blood. Not having the composure to think of closing his nose, he could only be in shock from the tragedy that was in front of his eyes.

“W-what in the world...Happened.”

He muttered that in surprise. And right at that moment, the sound of footsteps were coming close to him from behind. Roppu turned back as if trying to protect himself from what would come, but it was already too late. That person had closed the distance between then enough to easily touch Roppu.

With cold eyes, the person looked at the trembling Roppu. And clenching the first that was holding that sword dripping blood...

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At the underground corridor, there was a mountain of rubble.

Because of the shockwave of the explosion, part of the walls and the ceiling crumbled

down. The corridor was now filled with dust and the smell of blood. The figure of Kurumi, who was at the center of the explosion, was no more to be seen. Only the knives she used were meaninglessly lying on the ground.

Vrusto crawled out of the pile of rubble that had accumulated on his back.

“Really, she was bluffing even at her last moments. Why would she blow up all of the sudden... Did she put something at her teeth for that?”

Vrusto mildly coughed. Through his whole body, many fragments of the rubble pierced him and the wounds made by that were bleeding. Demons were more resilient than humans, but if one was to directly receive an explosion, there would be danger of dying. Maybe because of lack of blood, his eyesight was slightly trembling. Vrusto clicked his tongue loudly.

“Hey, get a grip.”

After he got out of the rubble, he extended his hand to the place he was buried before. While complaining, he was drawing Riku out of the rubble. At that moment the white light of the explosion filled the whole place, using his sense of smell, he ran to where Riku was sent flying. Riku had a superhuman strength that was comparable to demons, but her body was still the body any human would have. Being caught by an explosion from very close, it wasn't strange that she would be sent flying. For her to have her body intact was close to a miracle.

While slapping her cheek, Vrusto muttered.

“Hey, ojou-chan? Are you still alive?”

“...More or less.”

Riku opened her eyes slightly. Because Vrusto had protected her, she had less superficial wounds than expected. But even so, she was badly hurt. The moment she tried to pick up the halberd that was lying on the floor, pain went through her head.

“...gh.”( .....っ、 )

Right at the center of her head, there was a ringing pain. Riku lightly pressed her right hand on her head. Touching it, she noticed that the back of her head was swelled. Perhaps when she was blown away by the explosion, she had violently hit her head on the wall. Maybe it was just the feeling, but she was slightly nauseous.

“Are you alright?”

“...If it is only this much, there is no problem.”

Picking up her halberd, she leaned on it like a staff. Then, as if she remembered something, she looked at Vrusto.

“Thank, you.”

“Stupid, it’s my duty. Duty. My babysitting still continues.”

Vrusto had his usual tone, but he wasn’t hiding his complete exhaustion. Riku gave a wry smile.

“I’m already seventeen.”

“By me, you are still a brat... Now, what should we be doing, ojou-chan.”

Riku was whipping her head to work.

By how loud the sound of the explosion was, it was certain that the spiritualists noticed it. They should assume that soon they would investigate about it, and then get to where they are. If it was her usual self, she would have been able to immediately kill them all, but at her current condition, she was a bit anxious about fighting. If it was only one or two people, she would be able to win. However, if it was more than that... If there were more, she didn’t know whether she could do it.

Besides that, at this condition, fighting Rook Barusak was impossible.

Although with all the issues, he was someone she had lived under the same roof for seven years. Riku knew very well Rook’s talent. In order to confront the Barusak genius that

would only appear once every one thousand years, she had to have her body condition in perfect state. He wasn't an opponent that could be so easily defeated with her body being in such bad condition.

"It's frustrating, but... We are pulling back."

"Understood."

Riku and Vrusto started walking. The path they came from was blocked. Since it couldn't be helped, they could only look for another way to the surface. No matter how much they walked, they couldn't find the exit. Gradually, her headache worsened and the feeling of nausea welled up. Desperately bearing all this, she kept moving her feet.

How long has she been walking? By the time she didn't know anymore how many times she had turned to another corridor, Vrusto stopped his feet. With a serious expression, his nose diligently moved.

"Sorry... Ojou-chan, keep walking straight to this way."

"What's the matter?"

"Ah... It's just that it looks like I dropped something captain gave me to look after. I will go back pick it up in just a moment. Ojou-chan should just keep going forward. What, I will catch up right away."

Giving a silly smile, Vrusto ran back to the way they came from. All happened very fast, so Riku could only keep standing still motionless, glaring at the direction Vrusto went to.

"Liar."

After muttering that, she forced her weighting feet to turn back.

She didn't hear anything about Leivein entrusting Vrusto with something. He most likely noticed with his nose the presence of spiritualists. If it was to become a fight against the spiritualists, then Riku, who was wounded, would only be a hassle.

For some reason, she didn't have the feeling that Vrusto was using Riku as a bait so that he could run away to safety.

Vrusto was probably standing in the spiritualists way to buy time for Riku to run away. Perhaps this was just that he doing that for Riku to run away as an officer of higher ranking, and it being only the extension of his "babysitting". She wasn't able to get a grasp of Vrusto's intentions, but at least, if she was at his place... She would choose to let Vrusto run away and go fight the spiritualists.

Slowly, little by little, Riku was getting back to the path they came from. And then, she had heard a deep sound of something clashing that had no comparison.

A thick voice full of anger and metallic sounds resounded from the depths of the corridor ahead. Tightly holding her halberd, she hurried her feet. It was clear that further at the next corridor, there was a battle happening. Running through the other side halfway, it was possible to see the death bodies of spiritualists at the ground. There were five, six spiritualists lying at the floor with blood flowing from them. There were some that were twitching, making one wonder if they were still breathing.

But there were others that were still standing. Three spiritualists pointed their swords to Vrusto, who was full of wounds. Vrusto was fighting against three spiritualists by himself. He had a spear stuck at his body and a sword pierced through from his back, but even so, he still held his sword tightly.

"Shit, this is a tough one. This savage demon!!"

"As if I would let you by that easily!!"

Wielding his sword, he charged to one of the spiritualists. But, maybe because of his wounds, comparing to how he usually was, his moves were dull. Being hit by the spear, his sword flew to the air. Losing the weapon he is skilled at, Vrusto was surrounded by the three spiritualists.

But even so, Vrusto kept fighting. Clenching his fists, he glared at the three spiritualists. Right at the moment he bended forward his back as to go break through the encirclement, he stopped moving right away. From where Riku was standing, she was able to notice that Vrusto's nose moved.



“That’s the end! Demon!”

The spiritualists brandished their swords from three sides at Vrusto, which had stopped moving.

But Vrusto was showing a fearless smile.

“Stupid. The ones that are finished are you guys.”

Together with these words, mustering her strength, Riku kicked the ground. She leaped in direction of the spiritualists. And then, aiming for that defenseless back, she swung her halberd down.

“Hello, spiritualists.”

While slashing at the back of that spiritualist, she muttered in a small voice. The spiritualist that was suddenly attacked had the expression of shock on his face. Riku cut off his torso, sending it flying.

“Wha? Another one!?”

By Riku’s intrusion, the spiritualists had their encirclement broken. As to protect Vrusto, she went to the front of the spiritualists.

“Hey, brat. You... Why didn’t you do as I told you?”

“...This is giving false reports to a superior officer. I hate lies.”

Saying that, she pressed her halberd down at the ground. In fact, just for her to keep standing, Riku was already giving her all. The intensity of her headache worsened; if she were to stop paying attention, she would have probably collapsed. But even so, Riku held her halberd.

“Anyhow, if I were to run away like that, they would have caught up. Besides, something like being chased by spiritualists... Just by that my nausea gets worse.”

Saying only that, she forced herself to move her body.

The spiritualists were taking distance from Riku, but Riku wouldn't let them run away. Pressing the halberd at his bosom, Riku horizontally swung it. With the halberd deeply gorging at his belly, the spiritualists fell down on his back.

“Ho-how dare you! You red head!”

The remaining spiritualist shouted something, but what he shouted... Riku didn't hear. From the pain and the nausea, Riku's consciousness began to become hazy. After bending her body to deflect the sword that was thrust at her, aiming at the spiritualist's head, she dropped down the big lump of metal her halberd was. With his scared expression, his head was crushed more easily than a fruit would. Liquid similar to the red juice of a watermelon poured upon Riku.

“With that... Would this be the end?”

At the that she muttered that, she had already went over her limits. Crumbling down, she sank in the sea of blood. With a splash, she fell to the ground. By that time, it had become difficult even to slightly move her finger.

Even so, Riku was mustering strength to somehow get up. She didn't have the time to be lying down at such place. She needed to stand up as fast as possible, get out of that place together with Vrusto and meet with Roppu. And then, she needed to rethink of a plan to defeat Rook. Riku was forcefully trying to raise her eyelids.

As she did that, inside her vermillion colored world, she saw a pair of white shoes that particularly stood out.

“Thank goodness... You were still alive, Riku Barusak-sama.”

The woman wearing white clothes was looking down at Riku. Overall, her body was slim, and she felt like she was the purest thing Riku ever saw. The woman, who had her eyes closed, extended her hand to Riku. And then, she muttered in a way that seemed somehow apologetic.

“Nice to meet you. I am Shibira... I am your ally.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 26**

# SHIBIRA

Where would here be?

Seeing the different ceiling, Riku vacantly wondered where she was.

She felt something cold and soft touching her forehead. Reaching it out by moving her heavy arms, she noticed that it was a towel. Different from the cold and uncomfortable to sleep beds she usually slept on, she had been sleeping on a soft and clean white bed.

After slowly turning to the side, she saw Vrusto sitting on a wooden chair. He had his arms crossed and eyes shut. Having had his wounds treated, his whole body was covered with bandages. Right now, rather than a wolf demon, he looked more like a sleep-talking mummy.

“...Why... am I...?”

Here it wasn't the garrison of the Dragon Demon Division she had got used to live at, nor was it the room of some fortress. What that room most looked like would be a room of the Barusak residence, but as far as she was concerned, the room here had furniture of much higher quality than there, and overall, it brought about a calming mood.

“Hm... Oh, ojou-chan, were you awake?”

By of Riku's voice, Vrusto opened his eyes. Perhaps he hadn't been sleeping, but only had his eyes shut. Vrusto showed a face that seemed to be of relief.

“After that had happened, ojou-chan lost your consciousness. It's really good that you woke up.”

“...Lost consciousness?”

Vague memories flooded her mind.

After she arrived at Derufoi city, she went around the town together with Charlotte, and then, the one who appeared in front of her...

“That’s right, Rook!”

After saying that as she jumped to her feet, she was completely woken up.

In order to encounter with Rook, she went after Charlotte. However, their guide, Kurumi, was in fact a traitor, and because of all that happened, it ended up that she self-exploded. Because of that, Riku got severe wounds such as when she hit her head very hard, and after killing the spiritualists that went after them, she reached her limits. And right before she had lost consciousness, the last thing she saw was...

“It is very good you have woken up.”

Coming from close to Vrusto, Riku heard a gentle voice.

The woman who was on every point white was giving a smile to her. She had her whole body covered in a cloth so white one would hesitate on touching and had a silk like white hair that extended to her back. That woman that had her eyes shut tight opened her well formed lips.

“Let me give my self-introduction once again. I am Shibira. I work at the shrine at Derufoi city. It’s an honor to meet you, Riku Barusak-sama.”

Shibira extended her hand to Riku.

At that moment, she was about to take her hand, but she stopped midway. Following that, the hand Riku had extended took the cloth that was covering her own forehead. Narrowing her eyes, she started inspecting the cloth. She didn’t have the confidence on the knowledge she had about that, but if she were to sell that at the market, she would get silver coins for that. She suddenly felt it was unbelievable that cloth of such quality was used simply to cool down her head. Riku couldn’t decide whether all this was truly the woman having goodwill of her and whether there were anything behind the scenes.

“Is that yours?”

“Yes. I am your ally after all.”

“Hmph, is it really so?”

Vrusto said bluntly as if he was spiting out these words. Sitting between Riku and her, Vrusto was glaring at the woman full of disdain.

“I am grateful for treating our wounds, but all this is suspicious. ...I don't really want to think about it, but are you really not thinking about just getting our gratitude so that you can get something in exchange? Or maybe, you want us to get careless and then kill us.”

But even though Shibira was receiving words that were almost like threats from Vrusto, her expression didn't change. Riku thought about Kurumi, but that was different from that false smile Kurumi had before. If one were to say, that expression would be like a frozen lake at winter in the center of a deep forest. Being completely silent, she looked at the direction of both Vrusto and Riku.

“If you were to remain at that place, Riku Barusak-sama, and you as well, would end up dying. ....Even if you were to remain alive after all that, you would eventually get hunted down by the Buryuccer spiritualists, and so, we wouldn't be able to talk right now. Therefore, I lead you here to this shrine so that I could have the opportunity to talk to you.”

Shibira gently moved her hand as if to appease them.

“I do not have a sword on me. There is no such thing hidden in this place either. But you do possess weapons. ...With your smelling capability, it should be possible to know there are no spies or guards around this place.”

“...”

Riku checked Vrusto's reaction. Guessing from his face, it seems it was as Shibira had said. The gorgeous cloths she were wearing also made the shape of her body stand out. It didn't look like she was hiding a dagger or anything else. Of course, it also didn't look like she had bombs attached to her body like Kurumi did.

“Why do you need to talk to me?”

After Riku spoke those words, Vrusto protested with a “Hey!”. However, she ignored him. Although her body hadn’t completely recovered, it was much better than the time she was still at the underground passage. Not only her headache had lessened, but she didn’t feel nauseous anymore. If she were to look around, it would be possible to see the halberd she would always use next to her bed. If it was that Shibira who didn’t possess any weapons, butchering her would be easily done.

If she were to tell lies, it would be enough to simply not listen to her.

“Yes. In fact, I need to talk to the other you.”

“To the other me?”

Riku frowned.

Vrusto looked at her almost as if he was already saying “What are you even talking about?”. Riku shook her head. She was only Riku Barusak, and was nobody else. She had the feeling she had heard talks about her having a split personality before, but Riku wasn’t the owner of such rare characteristic.

“What are you talking about?”

“I see... Then as expected, she really had been eaten.”

Shibira, for the first time had shown a sad expression.

“Had been eaten?”

“No, please, forget about what I said. It can’t be restored anymore.”

Shibira wanted to bring an end to the topic. But by doing that, it only made Riku get more interested instead. Leaning her body forward by quite a bit, Riku glared at Shibira.



“What did you mean by “had been eaten”?”

“I cannot see the reality. In exchange for that, I can see the future.”

Saying that, Shibira put her right hand above her eyes.

The information Keity Foster had told her was being revived at the back of her mind. Unconsciously, Riku snorted together with a smile.

“I’ve heard about it. I don’t believe in unchangeable future though.”

“Yes, the future I see is not unchangeable. But it is a future that has high chances of occurring. Even at this moment right now, the future is constantly changing. The future I can see is only the most possible occurrence only considering the present. The decisions of people might change, but also might not change.”

Shibira was showing a smile that vaguely had the feeling of sorrow on it. Perhaps, how she is talking to them at this moment is nothing more than a scene she had already seen. Perhaps, it is different from the scene she had seen. But to Riku, who couldn’t see the future, such things didn’t matter.

“And then? Does this have anything to do with the thing you said that had been eaten?”

“Yes. In fact, ten years ago, I... I foresaw the future which I gave my prophecy to the two Riku Barusak. To the other Riku Barusak that was sleeping inside you. But the situation of the day of that future had changed. The future you brandished your sword as a spiritualist to the future you brandished your sword for the demons.”

“Ten years ago? What, was it about that?”

Riku lost interest in an instant.

If it was only this much, it was possible to know after investigating a bit. The fact Riku was thrown away was made a secret to the public. The official announcement should have been death by illness. But she being thrown away was already taken for granted, and there wasn’t much need to investigate anything about it.

Of course, for them to investigate to the point of knowing she had been recruited by the Demon Lord army would prove to be a very prolonged work. But even so, it wasn't like it wouldn't be impossible. If a red haired human surnamed Barusak was to stand out, people would immediately notice it was Riku.

“This kind of thing can be known just by investigating. The useless myself that was aiming to be a spiritualist was thrown away... And became another myself. It would be something like that, right?”

The reason why nobody knew about Riku like Toudo did was simple.

Nobody had any interest about Riku after what happened. The fate of some useless kid being thrown away from the cliff; such a thing wasn't worth investigating. It was all there was to it.

“Thank you, it is enough. Thank you for treating our wounds.”

She felt appreciation for the acts Shibira did for them.

Even though they were from the Demon Lord Army, it didn't seem like anything in particular would happen because of that. Guess from her words and from the details of why she had saved them, she could reach the conclusion that for Shibira to treat their injuries was something to be grateful of. If she was to leave them at the underground passage, they would be attacked by spiritualists and both of them would get disposed of. Riku couldn't understand why she wanted her way to even treat the injuries of people she didn't even know.

More than anything, her smile wasn't like the false smile Kurumi had before. Shibira was only a very silent and honest shrine maiden.\*1

“...Is that so?”

“Yes. Sorry, but I'm already leaving. I need to meet with Roppu... Meet with a friend soon. Could you guide us to the exit?”

Standing up, Riku put the halberd on her back. After hanging the silver sword at her waist,

she gave a glance to the perplexed Vrusto and walked to the exit. To Riku's actions, from behind Riku, Shibira's words came to her.

“I understand. I will guide you to the exit. However, please, let me say only this. Riku Barusak will not live to the next winter.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 27**

# AN IDEALISTIC FUTURE

...Riku Barusak won't live to the next winter.

By the words that couldn't be ignored, Riku stopped her feet.

But she didn't look back. From the mood that was telling the severity of the situation and Shibira's tone of voice, the case could only be described by the word "serious". In other words, it was something that Shibira had seen in the future. Letting out a small sigh, while still looking at the door, Riku asked Shibira.

"...Is that so? Incidentally, could there be any way to avoid this?"

"I don't know. But if I were to say the way that would certainly solve this problem, it would be leaving the Demon Lord army."

From Shibira's answer, Riku burst out with laughter. She knew that Shibira was seriously answering her question. But that's exactly why there was no way he wouldn't start laughing.

"That's impossible."

After still having her smile on for a while, she opened the door. At the other side of the door, there was a corridor with a floor made of stone. Because it was nighttime, the moonlight coming from the window was shining at the dimly dark floor. Riku slowly looked back. The room was filled with the mild light and Shibira looked like she was being basked in light. Once again, Shibira extended her hand to Riku.

"If you have nowhere to go, I can shelter you in this shrine. Once all of this cool down, you can dye your hair and be introduced to the society. I can give you my hand on that."

That hand was filled with good will. But Riku shook her head. While lightly raising her right hand, she went off to the dark corridor.

“Thank you. But I need to decline. ...Let’s go, second lieutenant Vrusto.”

“Hey, wait a sec!”

Riku started walking through the corridor. Each of her footsteps echoed.

“...If you go straight through this corridor, you should arrive at the exit. May you have good fortune, Riku Barusak.”

Both the sound of Vrusto hurriedly following after her and Shibira’s calming voice resounded from behind. Just like Shibira had said, as she narrowed her eyes, she noticed there was a wooden door at the end of corridor.

“Ojou-chan, is it really fine?”

After catching up to Riku, Vrusto whispered to her. Vrusto had a weird expression on his face. To Vrusto’s weird expression, Riku leaned her head to the side.

“What is really fine?”

“Ah, what to say... Wouldn’t it be better to do as Shibira told you? If you leave the Demon Lord army, the thing about you being able to extend your lifespan. Your death doesn’t seem like it will be because of illness or something like that.”

“Ah, you were talking about that.”

Riku loosened her lips.

If she were to leave the Demon Lord army, she would be able to get away from the future she dies. In other words, her death that would happen within this year would most likely be at war. What kind of place, how, who was the person who killed her; such things she didn’t know. All she knew was that if the future Shibira had seen became true, then Riku would die at battle.

“Of course, I don’t plan on dying.”

“But if you keep in the Demon Lord army...”

“Don’t make me say the same thing again.”

Riku glared at Vrusto. A force that was as if he had a halberd pointed right next to his neck went through his body.

“I will fight for captain until my last moment. Besides... There is no way I can throw everything away for a future that might not really happen.”

As she had said that, they arrived at the front of the old wooden gate.

The future Shibira had talked about wasn’t anything more than a future that had high chances of coming true in the end. Maybe by leaving the Demon Lord army, she would be able to get away from the future she dies, but if she were to do the, the conviction of Riku Barusak would die. Rather than living the rest of her life by killing her own conviction, she would rather stick with it to the end.

Perhaps this was only idealistic. Perhaps the path which she would live on was the correct choice. But even if her body was still living, if her heart was dead, there would be no meaning to it. Only this conviction she wouldn’t let anyone decide for her.

“I will decide my own future.”

After closing her mouth tight, she pushed the wooden gate.

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The house of the lord that governed Derufoi city was a very big house.

With many unused rooms, the effort to keep all of them clean was very regrettable. But no matter which influential person's residence it was, there would always be a dirty room.

An underground room full of cells locked by a key would be the most usual example. Inside the place filled with the stench and with many torture instruments and skeletons around, Charlotte was lying at the floor. She still wasn't subjected to torture, but soon enough they would start to do it so that she would blurt out crucial information of the Demon Lord army.

"This disgrace... There is no way I can accept that."

Charlotte was biting her lips.

Her older brother, who was an influential figure for being the demon lord, was suddenly sealed away, and without knowing about anything, she became the demon lord substitute. Sitting at the throne her older brother was sitting a few days ago and giving orders to his subordinates felt very uncomfortable.

Getting used to the position of demon lord substitute, for these two hundred years she had been preparing for the unsealing of her brother... She had been killing off her feelings and working for the sake of the Demon Lord army. Of course, sometimes she would take a breather, but this was all there was to it. She was always aiming to be what one would expect of someone that was the younger sister of the demon lord. The first time she went against it... The result was that.

It was different from the forced gentleness of her subordinates... The gentleness that boy approached her with was just as if it was of her beloved older brother. She was embarrassed that she had fallen in love with the boy even if it was a bit. Because of that, many of the elite of the Demon Lord army were killed.

"...This is a punishment."

It was a punishment that felt out of reality. Tears were flowing off her eyes. The moment the pearl like tear that was flowing through her cheek fell to the ground...

"Sorry, I got a bit late on coming to save you."



With a clatter, the gate of the cell opened. Charlotte's eyes were wide-open. At the other side of the gate, the spiritualist boy that had been gentle to her was there. Showing a wry smile, the boy rushed over to Charlotte.

“What are you doing!?”

“It took much effort to calm down Cellia. But as expected... I think killing you is wrong.”

The silver haired boy untied the rope binding her without hesitations. And then, he gently lifted Charlotte, who had been sitting at the floor, into his arms. Because of the words overflowing with gentleness, Charlotte trembled.

“Why... You, you are a spiritualist, aren't you?”

Charlotte asked him while sobbing.

Something such as a spiritualist saving a demon was completely unheard of. In fact, all of her escorts were all... Were all exterminated by Cellia Buryuuser. Also many other demons were killed by other spiritualists. Her brother was sealed only because they couldn't kill him. There was no way a spiritualist would be gentle to a demon. It was obvious there was something behind the scenes.

But the silver haired boy said with a gentle voice.

“Yes... I'm a spiritualist. But I don't see you as a wicked demon.”

These words went straight to her heart.

They were words that were gentle on all points and weren't two-faced. Charlotte felt her cheeks, and then her whole body warm up. Her heart that had been filled with his affection was dominating her.

“I... I want to change the current state of the relation of demons and spiritualists. That's why...”

I want you to lend me your strength. I want you to live.

The moment these words left the boy's lips, a thundering sound shook the ground.

Yes, it was the sound of Kurumi self-exploding underground.

But while Charlotte obviously didn't know about that, nor did the boy. Clearly, both of them were surprised by the sudden thundering sound and tremor.

“Wh-what was that!?”

“Eh, earthquake? Was there earthquakes in this world? Even though there should have been no way for an earthquake to happen at this timing!!”

The boy's face crumbled.

Charlotte was staring at the boy puzzled. Looking at how the boy was panicking at the unexpected event made one want to laugh. Even though she had been thinking he was the type of person that would always be completely calm, she had ended up seeing another side of him.

It was very different to the attitude of a saint... It was obviously a reaction more suited to his age.

“Wh-why are you laughing?”

“Although I was thinking you were like a kind saint before, right now I can only think of you as nothing more than a human.”

With Charlotte laughing at him, his face suddenly became red. Of course, this would be because of his embarrassment. It was as if there was steam raising from his face to the point of even making a sound.

“Th-that's rude. I am a human to begin with.”

“That's right. Humans are humans. And demons are demons.”

“Y-yes, that’s right. But, for it to be segregated like that... I really don’t think it is good.”

Clearing his throat as if to start his talk again, the boy held Charlotte’s hands. And then, as if he had chose his words, he spoke.

“Please. I’m a human, and you are a demon, but... If you cooperate with me, we can make a world everyone can smile. Please, lend me your strength!!”

Charlotte showed a wry smile at his childish ideal.

If it was the words of the saint like boy from a few moments ago, perhaps she would have agreed to him without saying anything. But the child like boy’s immature words didn’t make her heart move.

A world where everyone can smile was indeed fabulous. It was the world she and her elder brother would always dream of. But once she sat down at the throne, she noticed something. Reality and ideals are different. In order to accomplish something, somebody would need to be hurt. In the end, all that was no more than an ideal she would dream of when she was a kid.

“If it was that easy to build a world of peace, nobody would be suffering by now.”\*1

Bluntly refusing him, she declared.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 28**

# LOSING THE GRIP

Charlotte picked up the sword that was lying at the floor next to her.

Its tip was rusty, but it wasn't to the point of being something to be concerned about. While lightly swinging the sword a few times, she exchanged glances with the boy. The reason Charlotte took that sword was a extremely simple one. She was planning to defeat the boy in front of her eyes at once and get away from that city, and maybe along the way, she would throw away the rusted sword and get a new one. Seeing Charlotte getting in position to fight without any hesitations, the silver haired boy... Rook Barusak became confused and made a clatter.

“Eh, wait a second? What is all this!?”

“There is nothing to be inquired. It's impossible to save the world with your childish ideals. If it is for me to go do that, then rather than doing this together with you, unsealing onii-sama is a much closer path to peace!”

Charlotte's sword was pointing directly next to Rook's throat. He hesitantly moved his hand as if to put it over the sword, but if he were to resist with the sword only a few centimeters away from his neck, he would get his head removed.

“What is it? Why don't you try to take my sword away? Are you planning on dying?”

While saying that, she swung the rusty sword. While dodging the sword blow in his most earnest, he was desperately thinking.

In Rook's memories, there were no descriptions of an earthquake happening. For the event to fail and Charlotte go attack him, it was only later on. However, even though he should have said the same words that were said in the game, Charlotte still went and attacked him. Because in the instant he drew his sword against Charlotte it would be the end of her route, he didn't use it. Unfortunately, Rook became unable to think on what he should do next.

“That’s because there is no way I can point my sword to you!”

He didn’t have the sadism to raise his hand against his beloved game character. Although she wasn’t his favorite character, she still was among his first five favorite ones. Even before in the game, he didn’t like to make the choices that would hurt her. While holding his feet from Charlotte’s attacks, Rook was becoming desperate and tried to think on what he should do.

“What’s the matter, brat? Won’t you fight back?”

“That’s... Because I don’t want to hur...”

“You don’t want to hurt me? Hmph, I have no interest in your childish ideals! Me and my onii-sama spent our life leading the Demon Lord army for these ideals too!! It’s not some greenhorn brat that can be babbling about ideals!”

Together with these words, the strength of the swings were increasing. In Rook’s forehead, sweat was flowing like a waterfall. No matter what, he wasn’t able to go back to the saint-like himself. More than that, in this state, wasn’t it already impossible to avoid the bad end? Only bad thoughts were going through his mind.

“You are losing your grip! You are full of openings, you brat full of immature ideals!”

Charlotte’s attack grazed Rook’s cheek. The sharp pain was felt at his cheek. Avoiding the next attack by a hair’s breadth, Rook raised his voice.

“Whether it is childish or not, you won’t know if you don’t try!”

The voice full of sorrow resounded throughout the cell room.

Hearing these words, Charlotte gave a bold smile.

“I can already know it even if I don’t try, brat.”

Charlotte hit the handle of the sword at Rook’s stomach with all her strength. Without being able to defend himself, all the air left his lungs in one go. Because of all the pain,

Rook crouched down while holding his belly. Charlotte didn't let that gap go by. After raising her sword, she swung it only to stop it next to his neck. While pondering about something, she looked at the groaning Rook. And then, after deciding something, she put the sword in her scabbard.\*1

“...Experience the world more, brat. After that, I will hear your answer. After seeing how this world is, whether you will still be able to spill those naive ideals, I will be looking forward to it. That's is if by that time... You aren't dead already.”

Saying those words that were accompanied with a wry smile, she quietly left the place. Rook kept motionless for some time. Rather than because of the pain, it was because he was surprised by Charlotte's words.

“...What is this?”

In the game, if he were to fail at this scene, he would have been killed.

But even though he should have failed, Charlotte left him alive.

Is this Charlotte's love for me?

Is this Charlotte pitying me?

Was that something she did only on a whim?

“Really, I don't know anymore!”

While holding his belly, he unsteadily left the vault. Even though it was the residence of the lord, Rook transformed it into a place full of spiritualists. It was as if just by walking a few steps, it was enough to encounter a spiritualist. In such place, there was no way Charlotte would be able to escape safely with her dragon horns.

“Please return safely, Charlotte-chan.”

“What's the matter, Rook?”

The one that reacted to his murmurs was a girl who had a clump of hair bundled up right above her ear.\*2 The owner of the voluptuous breasts that would make one unconsciously throw oneself onto them had both a very calming appearance and aura. But even so, she wasn't someone that could be looked down upon by her appearances. That girl was the character that could be boasted of having the most fighting strength at the game, Cellia Buryuuser. Without giving any mercy to the demons, it was a force that was to the point of even being called [Buryuuser cannon]. Of course, except for that, it was only the usual quiet and gentle heroine.

"Cellia, say, did you see the demon that was here just a moment ago?"

"Demon?"

Her gentle eyelids raised a bit.

"Rook-kun is too kind. The demons are our enemies, you know?"

"But... She wasn't a bad demon."

"There is no such thing as being bad or good for demons. That's right... I've just remembered something about demons. Actually, my excellent subordinates found an inn where demons were hiding."

Cellia's cheek blushed in happiness. It was as if she was a puppy waiting to be praised. But instead of doing that, it was like all blood left from Rook's face.

"Ce-cellia? And then, what... What happened to those demons?"

"Of course I ordered them to kill them all. About this time, the inn at the west side should be already dyed in blood. Of course, in demon's blood."

With a bright smile, she dropped down hell onto Rook.

In the game, except for a single person, all of Charlotte's escorts would have been killed. This single person was supposed to get in contact to the boss level demon Leivein Adlar



that was at the garrison nearby and come to rescue Charlotte, or so Rook had the feeling this was how the story was supposed to develop. Unfortunately, he didn't know in details on how this single demon was able to get to Leivein. Most likely, the demon that was at the inn had the chance of about eight or nine out of ten of being acquainted with Charlotte. No, even more than that, if the information that all the demons had been annihilated got into Charlotte's ears, it would be a big problem.

Although just when he had just told her he wanted to cooperate with her for peace, with how this kind of thing ended up happening, Charlotte would have completely lost interest in his proposal.

"Ro-Rook-kun? What's the matter? Pe-perhaps, Rook-kun also wanted to go kill some demons?"

"It's not that though... Ahahahah."

He was showing an empty smile on his face. Right now, all he could do nothing but smile.

Cellia was anxious on how Rook was acting. She was wondering if she had said something weird to him. Rushing over to the two of them, a spiritualist hurriedly came running.

"Re-reporting."

Although it wasn't a spiritualist Cellia directly had command over, he had the Buryuuser crest on his armor.

But the spiritualist was trembling badly. It was possible to see that there were a little blood on his armor. It felt like it was spilled blood from a demon, but even so, a bad feeling went through Cellia's heart. But there was no way she could let the spiritualist there, and also Rook, know her inner worries. Cellia retained her usual gentle face.

"What's the matter?"

While patting the shoulder of the hopeless Rook, she asked.

And with that, the spiritualist answered her while still trembling.

“Y-yes! Actually... It has been reported that the spiritualists that went to the inn were annihilated!”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 29**

# THE ARMY AT THE BACK STREET

Many lively sounds decorated Derufoi city.

Even with the day of the festival coming, the turmoil of the eve of the festival didn't calm down. In fact, because it was the festival day itself, all the liveliness had increased. Even the children not sleeping was overlooked at that day. Ignoring the previous demon invasion and putting off their work, all of them wanted to have fun in the festival that was at the front of their eyes. It was certainly a big event that would only happen once in the year.

That's why the townspeople of the city didn't notice.

There were some of them that were a bit uncomfortable and suspicious about the tremor that happened before, but it was all there was to it. Nobody did notice that at the shadows of the city, the battle between the demons and spiritualists was becoming even fiercer.

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After Riku and Vrusto got out of the forest of the shrine, they went straight back to the inn.

Maybe it would have been fine for them to go back to the entrance of the underground passage, but if one were to think on how the spiritualists immediately got to the passage right after Kurumi self-exploded, then it is possible to conclude that most likely the sound of the underground passageway crumbling down was also heard at the surface. Roppu must have thought about coming back to the inn momentarily and entering in contact with Keity. That's why Riku and Vrusto were now running through a back street, heading towards the inn.

"It looks like we will get to the inn faster than we thought."

Vrusto let out a bold smile.

At this festival day, there would be nobody eccentric enough to be walking at the back streets. Even if there was someone there, it would be only people that had circumstances they couldn't tell to anybody. Therefore, even if there were a red haired girl carrying a halberd and a guy wearing a very well made wolf mask running around, nobody would batch a glance. Rather, they would all think that if they were to intervene, they would get troubles for that.

But there was no way everything would proceed that easily.

“Stop, you two there!”

Riku and Vrusto put up a face of someone that had nothing to do with it, but even so, they were called.

It was a searching party that was looking for Charlotte, who ran away. However, neither Riku or Vrusto cared about that. Doing a sign with her hand to tell Vrusto to step away, Riku gave one step forward.

“What?”

“We are spiritualists of Buryuuser. Right now, there is a demon that has escaped from our grasp. Just so we can confirm, could you remove your costumes?”

“Oh? You are suspecting us?”

Riku made a very displeased expression. The spiritualist that was the closest to Riku slowly took distance from her while having his hand on the handle of his sword. There were no signs of them loosening their guard. With both her hands not holding the sword or the halberd, she 手を広げて1\* and approached him.

“That's rude. I'm not a demon; I'm a human, you know?”

“...If that's the case, why are you at a place like this at this time?”

“It’s just that all the turmoil became a bit too annoying. I only wanted to go to a quiet place.

Riku was playing dumb. The eyes of the spiritualists moved from Riku to Vrusto.

“This mask there is really very detailed.”

The spiritualists were glaring at Vrusto from head to toe. They were giving words of praise, but even so, the signs of caution on their eyes weren’t fading away at all. Rather, it looked like it became even stronger. Riku clicked her tongue inside her mind. Keity Foster’s arms and ears were those of a tiger, but her face was just like the one of a human’s. Therefore, back then, they left them without paying much mind. But Vrusto’s face was different from a human’s and was exactly like one of a wolf.

“Could you show it to me for a bit?”

While saying that, the spiritualist approached Vrusto. Vrusto didn’t answer to his question. When his hand got close enough that it would be possible to easily touch Vrusto, something in his sleeve shone. There was no way Vrusto would overlook that. In order to get some distance from the spiritualist, he was about to give one step back. But at that exact moment, with a knife that went out of his sleeve, the spiritualist attacked Vrusto.

“What are you doing!!”

Because the spiritualist got so close to him, there was no time for Vrusto to draw his sword or to avoid the attack. In that instant, Vrusto attacked with his claws. The sharp claws lightly deflected the knife. Having his knife sent flying, the spiritualist jumped back, taking distance from Vrusto. And then, while showing a smirk, he drew his sword.

“Hmph, you showed your true colors, you demons!!”

“There is no way fake claws would send a knife flying!”

The mood of the back street that didn’t have anything was now rising in tension. It was as if the air was getting denser, feeling like it was weighting down on the body. All the spiritualists got into a fighting posture.

“It can’t be helped. I would want to avoid doing some unnecessary exercise though.”

“Really, spiritualists should also go get a break at festivals!”

Riku took the halberd in her hands and Vrusto drew his sword. Her headache and her feeling of nausea lessened, but she still didn’t want to move too much. This was the same for Vrusto, who was covered in bandages. None of them were at vital spots, but his body was covered by wounds. Vrusto also wanted to avoid any pointless conflict. That’s why he let the spiritualists do whatever they wanted, but it seems that the plan had completely failed. They were not able to avoid the battle.

“Let’s start by you, little demon!”

The spiritualist that was the first to draw his sword went forward, aiming his sword at Riku. Sending the sword of the attacking spiritualist flying with a small movement, she cut his torso off, putting her strength onto the blow. His organs fell off from him and fell down at the paved street. Riku stepped on the organs that fell down on the ground.

“Without any greetings, you attacked us with a knife and even drew your swords... Do spiritualists know no manners?”

“Tch, somebody! Call reinforcements quickly!”

They were probably scared of how their comrade had died so easily. A spiritualist of high stature raised his voice as he was trembling. The person that took heed to his call quickly nodded. Turning his back, he ran to the depths of the street. But there was no way Riku would let them go call reinforcements.

“Naive.”

With her eyes shining, she kicked the ground with . As if to prevent Riku from attacking that spiritualist, the spiritualists stood on her way. Bending her body, she passed through them. In the perspective of the spiritualists, maybe that spiritualist was running fast, but in Riku’s perspective, it was so slow that filled her with boredom. In an instant, she caught up with him, and then, she whispered at the ear of the spiritualist that was desperately running.

“I won’t let you escape.”

“Hiii!”( ひいっ ! )

The spiritualist raised a groan similar to that of a cornered monkey. Although he looked back with his eyes wide-open out of fear, he still kept going forward. It wasn’t because calling for reinforcements was his duty that he was running, but because of Riku herself. Without any hesitations, Riku swung down her halberd. The sharp axe-shaped blade of the halberd lodged at the spiritualist’s spinal cord. Stepping at the spiritualist that fell forward to the ground, she pressed her halberd onto the ground.

“Well then, who is next?”

As Riku muttered that, the expression of the spiritualists changed. There were already only three spiritualists left. Previously, they should have been thinking that if they were to surround Riku and attack her all at once, it would somehow work out. But in practice, Riku had already killed two people. Not only that, there was still Vrusto, who clearly had the appearance of a demon, remaining. Saying that their chances of victory were hopeless wasn’t exaggeration.

“...Sh-shit! Don’t fear! In honor of the Buryuuser, we shall slay the enemy!”

But even then, the spiritualists got inspired. With that voice that was trembling to the point of being disgraceful being raised, their morale seemed to be rising up. Two of the spiritualists ran to Riku and the remaining one went to attack Vruto.

“I shall fulfill the resentment of our companions!”

“You damned red haired demon!”

While raising a battle cry, the two spiritualists charged at Riku. Riku’s expression didn’t change. She rotated her halberd at her hand as if all that was a bother. With the sound of the air being cut, as if he got scared because of that, the speed of one of the spiritualist dropped. But the other one didn’t stop. With his eyes bloodshot, he rushed forward to Riku.

“Take this! The resentment of our dead comrades!”



“Ok. Then, goodbye.”

With a simple movement, she cut his head off. The body that had lost its head was spraying blood as if it was a fountain. While her cheeks were being soaked with the spilling blood, she got closer to the spiritualist that was frozen from fear.

“I-I’m sorry. Ple-please, sp-spare me!”

His sword dropped from his hand. While unsteadily stepping back, he started to beg for his life.

“I, I have a child! It’s, it’s only a baby that can’t even stand up!”

Sweat was flowing down on the spiritualist’s forehead. Differently from the case of the spiritualist that attacked Riku with bloodshot eyes, perhaps this spiritualist was thinking about the face of his child that was at home right now. His expression, which showed he didn’t want to die and wanted to run away, was filled with fear.

“If, if I don’t come back, my family... My family will!!”

“Yes, very troublesome, right? That’s why you want me to spare you?”

Riku’s face became loose. Raising the corners of her mouth slightly, she was getting close to him. It was almost as if it was a smirk. The spiritualist thought there might still be hope for him to be saved. As if grasping hope that was like a single ray of light shining at the darkness, he extended his hands.

“I beg you... Spare me. I won’t tell about you to anyone. So...”

“Don’t wanna.”

Riku sent the hand that was extended to her flying. The street was filled with a shriek full of pain and despair. Giving a glance to the face soaked in tears of the spiritualist, without a fragment of emotion, she swung down one more blow. The head that was sent flying fell inside the sea of blood. Looking at his eyes, which were wide-open in fear, she muttered

to herself.

“Even though you took your sword, you weren’t prepared to die? If you hold your life so precious, then it would have been better if you ran away to begin with.”

“...Ojou-chan, so you are really worrying about what Shibira said.”

Vrusto, who had already skewered the spiritualists, said to Riku in a worried tone. Riku cut him off.

“Don’t make me tell you again. I don’t have interest in something like prophecies.”

Saying that, she wiped off the blood on her cheek. Having blood sticking to her was nasty. Riku began wanting to go to have a bath. Since their plan of saving Charlotte had been initiated, she didn’t have the time to go have a bath. Thinking about that, she decided she should get to the inn as soon as possible. Lightly swinging her halberd and spilling blood from it, she started to walk.

“Let’s go, second lieutenant Vrusto.”

“...Understood... Wait, ojou-chan!”

It was right after the instant she stopped her feet from Vrusto’s warning.

At the other side of the street, there were a huge amount of people pressing through. It was as like an army of housewives at a discount festival. If one were to look closely, it would be possible to see there was a little shadow at the front of that army that ran as if she was running away from them. It seems that the crowd of humans that were all holding swords were going after the small shadow running in front of them.

With the blonde hair that stood out even at night disheveled and holding a broken sword in her right hand, the shadow was running straight to Riku’s direction. That figure was just like...

“Mu, captain! It’s captain!! I want you to help me a little!”

As if saying “I finally found you”, the eyes of that small shadow were sparkling. She was running straight towards Riku. Following behind her, there was that army full of killing intent. As expected, facing such unexpected situation, even Riku had her face twitching.

“Ch-charlotte!?”

She wouldn't be forgiven for running away.

Charlotte had an army of fifty spiritualists following after her.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 30**

# REINFORCEMENTS

“We are turning back, second lieutenant Vrusto.”

And just like that, Riku was about to step back.

If it was ten or twenty people, she would be able to do it somehow. But right now, they were injured. They were able to deal with five people one way or another, but facing ten times this number was impossible. Their chances of winning were very low. With that kind of danger, they shouldn't face them at least at the moment.

“Wait, ojou-chan. Are you planning on abandoning the Demon Lord substitute-sama?”

Vrusto caught Riku's arm, who was about to leave the place. Riku wasn't able to see his face from her position, but his tone of voice was filled with anger.

“I'm not stupid enough to throw myself into a battle that is impossible to win.”

Riku shook of his arm.

She didn't care about Charlotte. Perhaps, if there were spiritualists from the Barusak among that army of people, the situation might have been different. However, the spiritualists that attacked them a few moments ago, the spiritualists they encountered underground and the spiritualists that came to the inn before were all from the Buryuuser. The possibility of there being a spiritualist of the Barusak there couldn't really be thought of. If that was the case, it would be better to retreat without fighting that army.

“But she is the top of the Demon Lord army, you know? If you abandon her, it will cause trouble to the captain.”

“Trouble?”

In that instant, her heart trembled.

That hesitation greatly changed fate. In a blink of an eye, the wave-like army kept pressing through the streets. Riku and Vrusto were both engulfed by this wave.

The spiritualists that were overflowing with killing intent pointed their sword and spears forward without hesitation. With that, it was necessary for them to get ready to fight.

“Kill them! Kill the demons!!”

“For the honor of the Buryuuser! In the name of Cellia Romaneti Buryuuser!!”

“Kill! Kill! Kill!!”

While raising their battle cries, the spiritualists charged with their spears pointed forward. As she mowed down the spears, she was cutting heads off. The blood that flew off spilled even on the faces of the spiritualists that came rushing, but none of them wiped the blood off. They didn't care about something like having blood sticking to the face. With eyes bloodshot and while getting soaked in the blood of their own comrades, they were aiming their spears and swords towards Riku.

“Without giving any greetings... For you to already come to kill me like that!!”

While clenching her teeth, Riku kept swinging her halberd. Drawing a circle around her in a swing, the spiritualists that were gathered close to her all had their torso cut off. There were someone's intestines hanging at the axe-shaped blade of the halberd, but Riku didn't have the time to shook it off. Right after that, a spiritualist charged at Riku with his spear, aiming very close to her neck.

“Tch, annoying!”

While sweeping her halberd at that spiritualist, Riku moved her gaze somewhere else.

Somewhere close to her, Vrusto was there swinging his sword. Having Charlotte against the wall and protecting her, the way he was desperately fighting perhaps could be considered admirable, with it being like an example to follow to other demons. Charlotte was also looking for a gap so that she could steal a sword from them. She was extending her hands and coming forward through any opening many times so that she could do that,

but right after she would do that, many swords and spears would come at her, and so it wasn't going very well. Unfortunately, Charlotte didn't have the time to pick up a sword.

“Don't look away, red head!”

There was a spiritualist swinging down his sword from her back. Turning her body the other way around, she swung her halberd upwards. Being cut in a straight line diagonally, the spiritualist instantly died and fell down to the ground. As if spiritualists were flowing from his cut back, wielding their swords, they pressed forward through the body. No matter how many times she cut them down, there was no end to it. Their numbers should have been much less than the numbers of the Bistolru spiritualists at the Ren fort and Myuuz castle battles. But each of their individual strength was greater.

“For the sake of Cellia Romaneti Buryuuser-sama! We will kill the demon that escaped! And its companions!”

“Drop the hammer onto the cowardly demons that killed our comrades!!”

With many voices being raised, full of morale, they charged.

With no time to rest, Riku swung her halberd. But each time she deflected the spears and each time she defended herself against the swords, little by little she was getting exhausted. The halberd she was holding was gradually getting heavier. As a result, her breathing was getting rougher.

Why did she need to fight for Charlotte's sake? Although the regret of not having retreated right away before was going through her head, she endured such feelings and drove them away. If she was unable to protect Charlotte, Leivein, who picked her up when she was about to die, would get bad reputation. Only that she wanted to avoid. While thinking that, she kept swinging her halberd.

“There are still, some left?”

Even after mowing down about twenty people, they were still full of vigor.

Even after cutting down thirty of them, the attacks wouldn't stop.

She had killed about forty by now. However, the number of people charging at her didn't decrease.

"Are their numbers, increasing?"

Maybe they had called for reinforcements.

Perhaps that was something that would obviously happen. The ones facing the fifty people full of bloodlust were only Riku and Vrusto, who were injured. Although it was a close fight, they were definitely reducing their numbers. If that was the case, it wouldn't be weird if someone was to call for reinforcements. Riku clicked her tongue.

"Today is really just like a nightmare!!"

As if to engulf her, many spiritualists came from above and swung their swords down. During this moment, a spear was thrust straight at her. Lightly jumping, after she got onto the spear, she drew her sword. Drawing the silver sword, she gorged the bosom of the spiritualist that was in front of her eyes and pushed him down with her body weight. Riku, who had just avoided the rain of swords, was now mowing down her surroundings with the halberd at her right hand. Ten spiritualists crumbled down onto a pool of red liquid as the result. Pressing the handle of the halberd at the ground, she tried to regain her breathing. Her whole body was sluggish. Her feet were somewhat staggering. Even if it was only a little, she wanted to rest. But there was no way the spiritualists would give her the time to do that.

"Die, red haired demon!"

Many spears were thrust at Riku. Riku positioned the halberd at her right hand as to defend herself. It wouldn't be possible to defend against all the attacks. But even so, at the instant all the spears came, she still using the halberd to defend and she held her sword with her left hand as to complement it. Narrowing her eyes, she was looking at the spears that were approaching her at the front of her eyes. And then...

"Scatter in pieces, human."

Suddenly, a single long sword fell down from above.



All the spears that were being thrust at Riku fell down to the ground broken, and the body of the spiritualists were all cut in two. In front of Riku, who got surprised about her targets suddenly dying like that, a pair of dragon wings widely spread. Although the wings merged with the darkness of the night well, it was as if both of them were shining.

“You held out very well, Riku.”

Turning his head over to Riku, she saw the two blue eyes.

The eyes that were blue like the unrestrained big sky.

“Captain, Leivein?”

It was someone that shouldn't have been here.

Riku had heard he was stationed at a garrison nearby, but she didn't hear that he would be coming here. Without being able to properly accept the reality of such good fortune that was in front of her eyes, she had her mouth open while having a surprised face. Running to Riku's side, who was acting like that, was the rabbit eared sergeant major.

“We came to help. It's too dangerous with only the two of you, captain.”

Roppu Nezaarand staggeringly supported Riku with his shoulder.\*1

“Sergeant major Nezaarand?”

“By the time I arrived at the inn, the spiritualists that were heading there had already been killed. ...Captain, please, rest here. Let lieutenant general deal with the rest of the enemies.”

“No... I can't let captain do the labor work by himself.”

Putting the sword in her scabbard, she held her halberd full of energy.

She wanted to fight together with Leivein someday.

She wanted to fight together with Leivein, just like his wings did.

She didn't want to be a burden that wasn't able to fight.

"Sergeant major, I will leave Vrusto to you."

"Eh, but, second lieutenant Vrusto is already being aided by lieutenant colonel Foster... Rather, it will be dangerous if you don't rest!!"

Without hearing to Roppu's advice, Riku rushed over to the wave of spiritualists. Most of the spiritualists had already lost their life by Leivein's hands. The great sword dripping in blood cut. As if it had sentience, the great sword whistled, cutting the air. Even though she was being reckless, she was cutting down the spiritualists that were going to attack behind Leivein.

"Go rest. Didn't I order you to do that?"

While cutting down the spiritualists, Leivein muttered. While raising her voice, Riku swung her halberd.

"No! I can't let captain having to do all the work."

While saying that, she had been killing spiritualists. While seeing her attitude by giving a sidelong glance to her, he had been crushing spiritualist heads with his hand. The corners of his mouth slightly raised.

"Is that so? Then, kill them all with the upmost of your abilities."

"Y, yes!!"

Receiving Leivein's words in her heart, Riku swung her halberd. Although only seemingly, it was possible to believe that her body was filled with more energy than before. It was as if her exhausted body that had reached its limits was resurrected. Getting covered in blood, she was running around the street killing the spiritualists. Their numbers were dropping in an incredible rate. A spiritualist that knew by experience he should go call

for more reinforcements didn't escape from Roppu's speed. After steadily killing them one by one, finally, Riku pressed her halberd next to the neck of the last remaining spiritualist.

“And with you... It's over.”

The last surviving spiritualist was showing fear on his expression. Riku thought he would do some stupid supplication. But with his trembling voice, he shouted as if he was directing his voice to someone.

“Ce-Cellia-sama! Banzai!!”

“Oh, sorry, but that voice won't reach anyone.”

The spiritualist that had shouted words of praise as to escape from the fear of death lost his head in an instant. With his eyes wide-open in fear, as he was saying those words of praise to someone... He had easily been killed.

After confirming that Riku had killed the last remaining person, Leivein walked to Charlotte's side. Charlotte was standing, being guarded by Vrusto and Keity.

“I've been late, Charlotte-sama.”

Silently kneeling, he lowered his head to the top of the Demon Lord army.

Looking at Leivein, who was kneeling, she snorted. And then, with a overbearing tone, she declared.

“You were late on coming here. Even though it would have been better if you had come here together with me to begin with... Well, it's fine. If it wasn't for your subordinate, maybe I wouldn't still be breathing by now. I shall give her a reward later.”

“Ha”(はっ)

“Umu, now then, let's go back home. We weren't able to meet with Shibira, but... There is no way we can do so after all this turmoil.”

Charlotte started to walk and Keity followed after her. By the time everyone had been affected by the feeling of wanting to go back home, there was a single person who felt like she wanted them to stop. It was Riku. Looking like she wouldn't move her feet anytime soon, her eyes were sparkling in a stranger manner.

Seeing Riku like that, Vrusto felt like rebuking her. After a sigh, he was about to tell her something, but before that, Leivein was faster with the words.

“What's the matter? We are going.”

In Vrusto's place, Leivein told Riku that. But Riku shook her head.

“No, there is no need to go back. Now that captain Leivein came, everything will be easily done.”

They slaughtered the enemy . Right at this place, they killed most of the spiritualists that were stationed at the city. Since that was the case, everything would be easy. In her eyes, the image of Rook, who would be comfortably sitting at the residence right now, reflected on her eyes.

“If captain is here, we can burst through that residence's defenses in an instant. And then, and then..!!”

“And then, kill a certain person that is at that residence?”

Leivein quietly said.

Riku nodded full of energy. While looking at his blue eyes, she expressed her sincerest thoughts.

“Yes. It seems the next head of the Barusak family is in there. If we kill him now, I think it will be much easier for us to advance towards the land where the Demon Lord has been sealed.”

“I see.”

Leivein nodded. While shaking off the blood that was sticking at his great sword, he looked at Riku. And then, with a low voice, he said.

“But right now, we will be retreating.”

“Wh-Why is that!?”

Because of the surprise, Riku gave two steps behind.

She didn't think her proposal would be rejected. She didn't know about Charlotte or Keity, but if it was her beloved and respected Leivein, she thought he would be able to understand. They had enough fighting power. Not only she still could fight right now, but if Leivein were to go as well, all would go successfully. But without giving any thoughts, the proposal was rejected. Leivein extended his hand to Riku's head. She had seen many times how his bloody hand crushed heads. Unconsciously, Riku prepared herself.

Perhaps she was about to die as a punishment for giving an advice that wasn't fitting to Leivein.

“Did you get degraded to some assassin that would rely on hiding in order to attack?”

Leivein's hand gently stroked Riku's head. She was surprised the reason her proposal was denied wasn't because Charlotte had declared they would go back home before, or because they had insufficient fighting power at hands, but a completely different reason, and also was very surprised by how he had stroked her head. Her red hair that was covered in blood was being stroked by Leivein without any hesitations.

“If you want to show your power, you must do it in a fair and square battle. Hiding at a shadow and attacking is something only weak people do. It is not something strong people do.”

Leivein was gently and gently stroking her soaked in blood hair.

He couldn't be thought as the same person that had been killing the enemies full of might before. Riku's heart was gradually being filled with happiness, overlapping her surprise. She embraced the feelings that felt like she had been recognized by Leivein.

“You may drop the hammer on those that threw you away on the battlefield. Doing so with the power you’ve been training for. ... I’m expecting from you, Riku.”

While looking at his spread wings at his back, Riku saluted.

“Yes, understood!”

Today’s battle, if Leivein hadn’t come to save her, she wouldn’t be living.

With that, her life had been saved by him twice. Although she had been recognized by him, this sort of thing was no good.

She wanted to become stronger. Become stronger and be more useful. Because her life was saved, she wanted to fight next to him to the point of being able to save his life at the times of battle.

Until her last breath.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 31**

# WHISPERS OF THE WOMAN IN WHITE COAT

(This title is so chuuniii!!!! ;-;)

The Barusak residence, which is located just at the outskirts of the capital, was engulfed into an unnatural tension.

It was as if that residence that was white as chalk was faintly being surrounded by black clouds. Even the lowest servants of the house had their expressions filled with a anxiety and tension. Inside the residence, Rook was alone walking. Without bringing anyone together with him, he was walking with his noble face twisted. His mood was felt like he could explode at any moment if one were to confront him in a bad manner. The servants that would as usual bow their heads when he crossed their paths, whether it was because they feared his irritation or because of another reason, they would hurriedly get out of his way.

Among them, there was solely one person... A single hero that would talk to Rook like usual.

“Oya, Rook, what happened for you to have such a dangerous expression like that?”( おや)

It was a woman wearing a white coat that was fiddling with her smoking pipe with a single hand. After giving a glance to the woman, he snorted.

“It’s nothing. It has nothing to do with Raku-oneesan.”

“If her cute and genius little brother gets in trouble, isn’t it the job of an elder sister to help him?”

The woman called Raku was showing a bold smile.

The head of the family, Raimon Barusak, had three children. Because the second daughter



was incompetent, she had been disposed of and is not living at the residence anymore. Setting aside that useless daughter, the two remaining people were extremely talented. One of them was the next head of the family who was even said to be a genius that would only appear once each thousand years, Rook Barusak, and the other person was Rook's elder sister, the chief of the research of cutting-edge spiritualist techniques, Raku Barusak. The two of them had good looks that wouldn't lose to the good looks the royalty had, with both having their characteristic porcelain like white skin that seemed unfit to the sunlight and hair as silver as snow.

But Raku would never properly maintain her hair. Her hair that was supposed to be a beautiful silver hair was very painful to look at. Adding to that, she probably thinks that having a haircut is a pain to do, and so, having her silver hair extending to her back, she had a dirty rubber band fitting to the appearance of her hair being used to tie it. Without comparison to Rook's hair, who would make one want to touch it, the difference was to the point of her hair making one want to close one's eyes.

"I know it well. I... I know everything."

Rook glared at Raku with a sharp glint on his eyes. In Rook's eyes, flames of hatred were burning. Clenching his fists, it looked as if he wanted to punch his elder sister Raku immediately.

"Dear me, what would you be talking about?"

But Raku's easygoing expression wasn't broken. Putting the smoking pipe in her mouth, the air became filled with smoke. Her demeanor seemed to be pouring oil in Rook's anger. Grasping the collar of her white robe, he lifted her up.

"Don't play dumb!! Because of your... Because of the bomb Raku-oneesan made, Kurumi had died!!"

Remembering Kurumi's loveable figure, tears started to come out of his eyes.

It was not only because she was a spy that was getting information from the demon side that he felt pained; he also loved her as one of the harem members. How many times had he used his hand to touch on her fluffy small tail that was fitting of a squirrel-shaped demon? While blushing, Kurumi would let him touch her smooth tail. But now, he couldn't touch that fluffy fur anymore.

Kurumi had died at the underground passage of Derufoi city.

He didn't know the situation in detail, but thinking how the deplorable dead body of Rebecca, who was like a little sister to him, was also down there, and also knowing about the death of the spiritualists that went down there to see what was going on, it was possible to assume that Rebecca and Kurumi had been cornered and... Had chosen death by their own.

"If Kurumi had to choose to self-explode... Then, there would be no way Rebecca would also be killed by getting caught in the explosion.

Tears were falling at the floor drop by drop.

He wasn't going to hear Rebecca's mispronounced words anymore.\*1

The little girl that would always be grasping his sleeves was not here anymore. She wouldn't show him her pure smile once again.

Rebecca had talent as a spiritualist dormant inside her. But they faced an demon that was able to corner Kurumi. Probably, it was a very rough fight. Her head that had been retrieved was scorched and no longer was it possible to read the expression on her face. The instant she had been caught by the explosion... Must have been painful. It was probably so agonizing she had cried out at the moment. Although Rook was her senior, he wasn't able to save her. She ended up dying a painful death. He was suffering with the memories of the time he had been raising her with care.

"Saying she died by being caught by the explosion isn't precise."

Although she was being grasped by her collar, her expression didn't change. As if it was a pain in the ass, she started to state the facts about all the situation.

"Didn't they tell you that from the autopsy results, she most likely had died before getting caught by the explosion?"

"Shut up!! Even so, but even so!!"

"That Kurumi, or whatever may that demon be called, simply got killed. Hey, it's that

thing. You can simply get revenge for the demon that killed that squirrel. Wouldn't you feel better if you simply annihilated the whole demon race?"

"Of course I will get revenge!! But, to hold a grudge... That... Doing that is no good."

He mustn't start despising the demons.

He wanted to have revenge on the demon that killed Selestinna. He wanted to kill the demon that cornered Kurumi to death. He wanted to drop the hammer of justice onto the demon that cut the adorable Rebecca in pieces.

But he couldn't hold a grudge over the whole demon race.

Rook always made sure he wouldn't go past this line.

In the game, the magnificent and hard-working main character Rook wouldn't hold a grudge over the demons no matter what kind of pain he would go through. In fact, even if one of the heroines was to get killed by the demons because of a wrong choice, he would still search for the path of reconciliation. That's why he couldn't hold a grudge over the demons.

He couldn't forgive the demons that not only killed Selestinna, but even Kurumi and Rebecca. He didn't want to have revenge on only the demons that were involved with those cases, but actually wanted to annihilate all of the demons. But for Rook to keep being Rook, only that he needed to avoid doing at any costs. Rook became desperate and started to reprimand himself. But rather than being able to bear those feelings, his hatred for the demons was only welling up.

"Blurting words of hatred to the creator of the bomb is merely you venting you anger, you know? I, Rook... I made the bomb just the way you desired. The demon that had actually used is the one to blame. ...Or perhaps, you never thought Kurumi would actually use that bomb?"

Rook clenched his teeth.

At the time, which Raku had been obsessed with the production of bombs, Rook asked her whether she could make a bomb that would explode only by pressing a button with the

teeth without thinking too much. Of course, the main character in the game didn't ask for such a thing. Rook had only asked for it just for fun, and didn't intend to actually use it.

Of course, even though Raku did make something similar to that, she wasn't able to make such button triggered bomb. However, she was able to make a tiny bomb that was small enough to fit on the tooth. Even after receiving it, he simply had left inside his desk, but... Because Kurumi insisted she wanted it, he ended up giving the bomb to her. Of course, he had told her to never use it no matter what when he gave it to her.

“By exploding a bomb at your teeth, it is possible to have chain explosions with bombs attached to the body... Why, why would you do that, Kurumi!”

“As the one who gave it to her, you have some responsibility, you know?”

Together with a sigh, Raku declared. Because of the way she acted, Rook glared at Raku intensely.

“Raku-ane!!”(Ane = sister)

“Be honest to yourself, my little brother.”

Raku looked at Rook as if she was looking at something pitiful.

“You hate the demons, right? Then, it is fine to annihilate them. I will spare no efforts to help you with that.”

“Don't kid with me! I, I don't hate...!!”

“Whichever choice you make, you will need to decide your resolve.”

“Resolve? I've been able to do that since a long time. I will make a world where demons and humans can live together peacefully and...”

“Stop with these ideals. Only brats would believe in those.”

From Raku's words, Rook felt a déjà vu.

It made him think about the words Charlotte had told him. His intense feelings faded away and that cold look that was being given to him was being revived at his mind. The moment he remembered about that gaze, Rook took his hand away from Raku. And then, he unsteadily stepped back.

"I... I'm... These are not ideals. I really want to bring peace to the world. Something like war is wrong."

"That's what you call an ideal. You are having a nightmare that is called having ideals. ... Well, it's fine. It's better if you prepare yourself for the next war. The Bistolru spiritualists had their head killed and is without a leader and the Buryuuser received a serious blow by losing many of their exceptional troops. The Bernal and Borukk spiritualists are guarding the north. The one that will be fighting is only the Barusak. In other words, the command of the battle was entrusted to you."

Raku's white coat was moving with the wind. Her painful to look silver hair was fluttering in front of Rook's eyes.

And then, after giving a last glance to her little brother, who kept standing there perplexed, she started to walk.

"Until you wake up from your ideals, do your best to survive. You can go visit me again anytime you want. I can hear your idle complaints and I will even prepare tea for you... My dear little brother."

While smoking her smoking pipe, his elder sister Raku, one of the heroines, left the place.

All that remained there was the smell of the smoke and Rook Barusak standing still. Clenching his fists, he glared at the marks of the tears that fell at the floor before.

As if to gulp down the anger and hatred, Rook gave a deep breath. And then, as if putting on a mask, he returned to his usual face.

He hated the demons so much he couldn't bear.

By destroying that race, he wanted them to taste the pain of losing one's beloved ones.

But this was a feeling that the main character shouldn't harbor.

“Even so, I...”

I must not hold resentment over the demons.

As if to engrave those words in his heart, he muttered them.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 32**

# STARRY FREEZING SKY

About one month have passed since the festival at Derufoi.

Comparing it to one month before, the coldness of the winter got harsher by one level. The same applied to the Myuuz castle. The mountains of Myuuz were completely covered in snow. Having her face buried in her muffler, Riku was sitting down on the castle walls. Looking at the sky, it was possible to see many stars shining. Each of them were sharply shining as if they were crystals\*1 Riku looked at the night sky for some time.

Riku preferred the sky of the afternoon over the night's. Every time she looked at the sky filled with stars, she would get solitary and uncomfortable. She preferred the blue sky that had no clouds.

But she didn't dislike looking at the stars sometimes. Sometimes, she wouldn't feel like training, but also wouldn't feel like sleeping. On those days, she would gaze at the stars just like she was right now.

“...Hm?”

At some point of the time she had been looking at the stars, she suddenly felt a presence behind her. She heard the metallic sound of when a person would move with an armor.

“What's your business?”

While still looking at the sky, Riku asked.

Demons that would come talk to her were only a few. She thought it could have possibly been Vrusto or Roppu, but it probably wasn't the case. If it was Vrusto, he would probably conceal the sound of his footsteps in order to give Riku a surprise, and if it was Roppu, the footsteps would be smoother. If it was one of her subordinates, then that person would have had introduced himself a bit sooner. She didn't know who it was but she didn't feel hostility. It would be fine even if she didn't turn her head.



Still in the same position, she waited for the answer.

“You were here- de gozaru! I was looking for you-de gozaru!”

In answer, the person spoke in a voice full of liveliness that broke the mood.

Turning back, she saw that standing there was a girl with a bright smile.

In her outward appearance, she was about Riku's same age or a bit older. With her appearances put in order and her hair was well arranged\*2. Her The most notable part of her appearance was her chest. Comparing to the thin Riku, it was possible to know hers was big even wearing an armor.

...It would be hindering when swinging a sword, Riku thought.

“...Who?”

Even so, it was a demon Riku didn't know about. There is no way she would forget about a demon that had such characteristic way of speaking and appearance. After Riku inquired her that, the girl happily saluted.

“I've been transferred to lieutenant commander Barusak's battalion. I'm the second lieutenant Asty Gortoberuk-de gozaru! I came to give my greetings to lieutenant commander Riku Barusak. Please, take care of me from now on.”

Asty readily bowed her head. At the gaps of her hair, it was possible to see two horns. Riku slightly raised her eyebrows.

“Gortoberuk?”

“Ah, excuse me. I'm lieutenant general Rudogar Gortoberuk's grandchild. I'm truly thankful for you to have delivered my birthday present despite being busy.”

“I was simply doing my job.”

Riku said as if there weren't any problems to that.

Riku intended to end the conversation with that, but Asty didn't show any signs that she would be leaving soon.

"Then, is there anything else?"

"Anything else, you say?"

Like a little bird, Asty inclined her head, and after a while, she put her hands together with a clap sound.(Tl/N:It's probably that hand sign people at anime do often when they get the idea of something. A clenched hand above an opened one with the clenched one hitting the opened one from above. Whatever it is, I have no idea how I am supposed to describe that in english D:)

"I know-de gozaru! I still didn't congratulate lieutenant commandant Barusak for the promotion-de gozaru! I've heard about your achievements at Derufoi-de gozaru! The ability you have for fighting fifty soldiers to protect Charlotte-sama and even being able to find and kill the traitor is without doubt a role model of the Demon Lord army-de gozaru."

While showing an absorbed expression, she was speaking.

Riku was hearing all that with a face of someone that didn't really have anything to say. None of what she said was wrong. The reasons for her promotion from captain to lieutenant commander was none other than those, but being told she was the role model of the Demon Lord army felt a bit wrong. While sighing, Riku stood up.

"I don't need any congratulating gifts. Instead, just do your best on your job,"

"Un-understood- de gozaru!!"

Asty's eyes were sparkly. Although she was under a weather that was so cold one wouldn't want to do without a coat, it was becoming very hot.

Riku headed inside the castle. Doing that, Asty followed after her and started talking.

“And then, I’ve been hearing from grampa... Uhh, from honored grandfather, I’ve been hearing about lieutenant commander Barusak-de gozaru! I’ve heard that you were a newcomer of great promise and even saved my honored grandfather’s life-de gozaru na? Is there any way I can thank you for that...?”

“...I don’t really need any thanks. Protecting the superior is the subordinate’s duty, isn’t it?”

“Of course-de gozaru! But strong people that actually puts this in practice is uncommon-de gozaru. Ah, that’s right-de gozaru! Come to think about it, that...”

“Don’t trouble lieutenant commander Barusak, Asty.”

Coming from above at the staircase, Gortoberuk’s voice resounded. Riku lowered her head, and so did Asty, falling a bit behind at the timing.

“I’m very much sorry, honored grandfather-de gozaru...”

“...Really... Asty, you still speak this way. You won’t find a husband.”

Gortoberuk gave a tired smile. His attitude full of ambition that he had at the time Riku had just come to the castle wasn’t felt anymore. These days, he had been having a tired face quite often. It was as if a shinigami or something like that ate up his vitality...

“I- I’m not worried about that-de gozaru. It’s my dream to become a soldier that won’t shame the name of Gortoberuk-de gozaru.”

“I see, I see.”

With his remaining left hand, Gortoberuk patted Asty’s head. And then, after giving a good look at Riku, he said.

“Lieutenant commander Barusak, please take care of my grandchild. Initially, I would be assign with my staff officer or my second in command to you, but...”

But the two of them weren't here anymore. Both of them died at the Myuuz castle battle.

Although he had many subordinates, the reason for the time he would be walking alone increased despite that probably had to do with how he had lost his trusted retainers.

Raising her head, Riku gave a salute.

"Understood, your Excellency lieutenant general Gortoberuk."

"Umu, now then... Actually, I have something to talk to lieutenant commander concerning your next task."

From his pocket, Gortoberuk took out a map. Receiving the map, Riku became even more silent. What was written in there was the town of [Karkata] and the route to get there.

"This is?"

"Umu, the city of Karkata is actually a small town we captured from the humans a few hundred years ago, and even now both humans and demons live there. I would like to entrust you this city for some time."

"Entrust this town to me?"

Riku opened her eyes wide.

Although she was promoted, she was still at the level of a lieutenant commander. It wasn't too much, and was definitely not enough for entrusting the management of a city.

"The ones governing the town itself will still be my subordinates. What I would like to entrust you is the security of the town."

Gortoberuk knew what Riku was thinking about. Quietly, he continued his talk.

"Actually, although this is a small town, it is a fortress town. Normally, there is no problems about its defenses. However, it seems that the spiritualist armies will be aiming

for this town next.”

“I see. You mean that if it is left like it is now, it will definitely fall, right?”

Gortoberuk nodded at Riku’s question.

“I don’t know why they are aiming for Karkata this time but... I will be relying on you, lieutenant commander Barusak.”

“Yes, then, tomorrow at morning, I will be departing.”

Giving a bow, Riku immediately headed to the lodging house her subordinates are staying at.

She didn’t have interest on the enemy’s intention. She would simply protect Karkata from the spiritualist’s hands as she was ordered to.

It was a fight to improve her strength and was ultimately so that she could be beside Leivein. Therefore, she will annihilate all the enemies.

All she saw right now was the war that is going to happen in front of her eyes.

And Riku Barusak didn’t know.

The fact that the one commanding the invading troops was Rook Barusak.

She didn’t know yet.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 33**

# .FATTENED PIG

The Karkatas town was a very beautiful fortress town.

The small castle that stood over the hill was protected by huge walls. It didn't have the beauty the royal capital or Derufoi city had, but the walls that were built by piling up stone had a strange beauty residing on it. Throughout the foot of the hill, there were grapes being cultivated. The white colored underside of the leaves would shine as they swayed with the wind. Looking from the distance, it felt as if one was seeing a sea of grape trees.

...But currently, it was winter.

The green leaves had dried and decayed and only the lonesome branches swayed with the breeze of the wind. Looking from afar, it wasn't possible to see that except as a desolate fortress city. However, once it was summer, it would change into a town even more enchanting to the eyes even more than its rumors. While thinking about that, Riku was sitting at her chair.

Inside the meeting room, the lord that governed the town of Karkata, Kraut Zawar, his adjutant, called as [The brains of Karkata city] and lieutenant commander of the Gortoberuk's third army division, Riku Barusak and two of her subordinates were gathered.

"Ahem... Well then, let's start, shall we?"

Clearing his throat, Kraut Zawar started speaking.

Originally being very like a civil officer by nature, he had an extremely weak body constitution despite being from the same wolf demon race as Vrusto. Even so, he was able to raise a good and clear voice so that the meeting would be able to proceed well.

"I think you've already heard about it, but the spiritualists are heading toward this Karkata town. Their numbers are approximately a hundred thousand strong. Even adding

lieutenant commander Barusak's reinforcements of four thousand soldiers, our numbers would only reach about twenty thousand."

"Tch, why... Why wouldn't lieutenant general send us more reinforcements!!"

The man sitting next to Kraut was lamenting in frustration.

But it was a meaningless talk. Although they recaptured Myuuz castle, many exceptional soldiers were lost. Gortoberuk's influence power was also declining inside the Demon Lord army. Actually being able to gather four thousand soldiers for them was something they should be grateful for.

"Be careful with your mouth. Lieutenant general Gortoberuk is our superior, you know?"

"Tch, I know."

The man shut his mouth.

Realizing the man wasn't going to say anything else, Kraut once again started speaking.

"The hill advantage is overwhelming. There is no way to they could capture this place besides doing a siege."

"A siege?"

Riku furrowed her eyebrows.

"Are there any problems, lieutenant commander Barusak?"

"Are you planning on going for a slow and gradual death? Even if you wait, there won't be any other reinforcements coming."

Sending Riku's troops was the best Gortoberuk was able to do, and it wasn't really thinkable he could spare any more troops to reinforce there.



In order for Riku to be able to stand beside Leivein even if it was by only a minute earlier, she wanted to advance her career as soon as possible. Even if it was only a little bit faster, she wanted to win this battle quickly.

“Are you planning on ignoring what will be happening outside and just hope the enemy will retreat?”

“Our food supplies are plenty. With this much, we can fight for five years.”

Kraut’s adjutant presented a document.

It had the information of all the supplied food they gathered. Giving a glance to it, Riku snorted.

“...Isn’t all this your planning of sitting back since the beginning?”

“Those are needed preparations. Once the war starts, getting new supplies will be hard after all.”

Even though they have a proper supply line, if there are any emergencies, they will be limited by their food supplies.

Therefore, it was necessary to stockpile supplies. Riku understood that logic, but she felt that that case had a different feeling from that. It was nothing more than just intuition she had no way of proving, but she felt it wasn’t possible to feel the enthusiasm of wanting to win in the eyes of the people from Kraut’s side. It would be fine as long as they were able to avoid them; if they were to be besieged, their enemies would eventually go back. It felt as if they were having such naive thoughts. She thought about openly pointing this out, but doing that would be too much hasty. Riku let out a big sigh.

“I’ve learned that going for a siege is always the last alternative. ....Shouldn’t we be thinking about whether we can somehow shave off some of the enemy’s strength right now?”

“Of course, it is as you say. It’s not something that needs to be pointed out. But, would you have any ideas? Such as a method of defeating a big army of a hundred thousand

without throwing away our twenty thousand men army?!”

“I’m still thinking about it.”

“If that’s the case, then leave the planning to us. You people should just retire and wait for the next order.”

With a nasty gaze that would be given when looking at a bug, he told Riku and her subordinates to leave the room. Riku, who was chased out of the room, was clenching her back teeth. Following behind her were Vrusto and Asty.

“Really, what’s up with them to call me only to ditch me after?”

“That’s true-de gozaru! I will send honored grandfather a complaint letter later-de gozaru!!”

“You are a bit annoying. Shut up.”

Their complaints were resounding through the corridor.

If someone was to tell on them about their complains and get executed for disrespect for the superior without even going to the battlefield, there would be no meaning to it. Both Riku and Asty became despotent. But that was only for the moment.

“...Just because they won a siege once that they are being so proud.

Vrusto muttered in scorn. Riku stopped her feet and turned her look to Vrusto.

“That you said, what do you mean?”

“What? Doesn’t ojou-chan know about Karukata’s old tale? ...Ah, ojou-chan was a human.”

Vrusto was showing an expression as if that had completely escaped his memory. Riku glared at Vrusto.

“A famous tale among the demons?”

“Something like that. Asty knows about that too, right?”

“I know-de gozaruyo. Hundreds of years ago, the spiritualists launched an attack to retake Karkata-de gozaru.”

As if telling an tale, Asty started talking about it.

“The demons had some tolerance over the humans who submitted to them, but the spiritualists looked at them as traitors-de gozaru. That’s why they were planning on doing an strong offensive that would annihilate all of them-de gozaru. The demon side stayed on a siege for three years-de gozaru.”

“Three years?”

Looking from the perspective of someone reading the documentation, it would seem like only a few moments.

However, experiencing this much time passing itself would prove that this is quite a long time. The people that fought for those three years must have suffered a lot during that siege. Even if they had a water well and food supplies to some extent, even then, how they fought day after day without having their mind broken ended up making Riku moved by that.

“Yeah, and then, because they didn’t think the war would continue for three years, their food started to deplete. At that time, the lord of the town fed their precious food supplies to a pig.”

“To fatten it so that they could eat?”

Vrusto shook his head to Riku’s question.

“It’s not that-de gozaruyo. Out of all things, they released the fattened pig outside the walls-de gozaru!”

Feeding the few precious food supplies they had remaining to the pig, and without even eating it, they released it outside. The demons that had seen that lord doing it should have been trembling.

“And then, the spiritualists got surprised by seeing how much food they still had and immediately retreated. They were made to realize their lack of food supplies and morale necessary to maintain the army.”

“I see.”

Riku let out a sigh.

Perhaps it was because this town had a past record of winning a contest of endurance. Because they won once using this method, the idea of simply going for a siege war got in the heads. There was a reason for them to abandon going for any direct engagements despite not thinking enough about other plans.

“Stupid fellows. With that, doesn’t it mean I won’t be able to go back home for years?”

There is no way Riku was going to be fighting a prolonged war such as a siege.

But the upper brass was obsessed with the idea of going for a siege. Before the enemy arrives, Riku needed to somehow think of a plan so that she could get an advantage over the spiritualists with just her army.

“Soon, I will start a strategic meeting. One only between ourselves.”

She needed to do something about that.

After closing her lips, she hurried to her room.

---

“A siege, you say?”

Riding her horse, Mary asked to Rook, who was ahead, diagonally located from her.

With no hesitations, Rook nodded.

“The strategy they will choose will definitely be going for a siege. In the past, among the stories Kurumi used to tell me, there was a tale about the siege of Karkata.”

The moment Rook said Kurumi’s name, unconsciously, he became teary. Mary twisted her face unhappy. But neither took concern about each other’s expressions. As if nothing had happened, Rook continued speaking.

“That’s why they will choose to go for that this time. Whether it is three or four years, they will endure and then will show us the fattened pig. ...Of course, I will beat them before they can turn the war into a siege.”

“However... That fortress is unexpectedly formidable. From what our forward troops found out, the fortress will be difficult to capture.”

Mary frankly spoke. But even so, Rook’s face was filled with confidence.

Things such as Selestinna and Rebecca’s death and Charlotte’s refusal which happened until now were all things that didn’t happen in accord to the development of the game. This time’s battle too was a battle that would have been easier to win if Kurumi was here. However, it doesn’t mean that Karkata can’t be captured if she isn’t present.

The brains of Karkata, and anyone else were obsessed with going for a siege. Despite being thin, their lord was as stupid as a fat pig. Rook didn’t have any feelings he would be losing for those people that couldn’t even see the reality.

“It’s alright, Mary. I have made a plan. A plan to bring their general out of that fortress.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 34**

# THE ANXIETY OF AN ELDER SISTER

Royal capital, Barusak residence.

At the spiritualist arts laboratory, there was a female spiritualist indulging herself into meditation. It was Riku's elder sister, Raku Barusak. Unusually, she stopped researching and was now silently smoking her smoking pipe.

"What's the matter, Raku-sama?"

A boy, who was Raku's attendant, asked her.

Raku was a scientist obsessed in researching. If the attendant wasn't watchful, she would without even eating her meals. Before he started serving her, there would be times which Raku would remain at her desk without eating or drinking anything for a whole week. Such hardcore scientist had been for the whole day looking at the sky without researching anything. This was an abnormal occurrence.

"Ah, Marius. It's nothing special."

While looking at the sky, Raku was smoking her pipe. The thin smoke was slowly raising to the sky in a spiral. , Raku didn't show any signs of coming back to her laboratory. After pondering for a moment, the boy called Marius put his doubt into words.

"Are you feeling unwell in any way? If that is the case, then I can arrange a doctor..."

"There is no need for that."

Raku flatly declared. And then, she tiredly shrugged her shoulders.

"Hey, Marius... Don't you think that recently, Rook had been having a bad luck?"

“Rook-sama’s luck, you say? ....That...”

Marius kept standing without being able to say any following word.

Rook Barusak was a prodigy since he was a child. At any rate, he was so exceptional that by the time he had just become five years old, he had already surpassed his father in achievements.

In special, the management of the territories was going extremely well. Because of his bizarre idea of burying dried leaves and spreading ash at that territory which no kind of crops could be cultivated, it had a rapid transformation of a wasteland to a splendid farmland. At the present time, the territories he governed were all filled with the liveliness of the people.

But his military accomplishments were a different story.

There was no way this was his weakness.

Rook possessed an exceptional talent as a spiritualist. In fact, in the spiritualist tournament which would happen once every two years, in his debut, which was when he was eight years old, despite it being his first time, he advanced to the quarter finals and regrettably lost, but in the one of when he was ten years old, he was able to advance up to the semi-finals, and in the one when he was twelve years, he advanced up to the finals, and finally, in this year’s one, he got hold of the honor of winning the tournament. ...Of course, adults were participating in the tournament as well. In other words, he had the strength for it to be to the point of breaking the record in the history of the spiritualists. But...

“Don’t hesitate. Say it clearly. Say that “his last battles were all disappointing.”

Snorting, Raku declared.

He possessed incredible achievements on the tournaments. But his achievements in battle were poor. Of course, he went to many battles. Two years ago, he confronted to Edgar Zerrik’s army and had shown an astonishing hit and run tactic. But recently, all became different.

At the Myuuz castle battle, at the beginning, they had a robust upstart. Everyone thought it



was already a won battle. Rook's "shadow" had shown them the path to the fort and they successfully captured the fort. But after that... Without participating in the invasion of the Myuuz castle, he went back home saying as the reason that the princess had called him and that being urgent.

Perhaps, Rook's luck started to decline since then.

"At the incident at Derufoi city, it was Rook's fault. Even though it would have been better if they executed Charlotte right away... Many spiritualists died meaninglessly. The strategy was naive; naive at all points."

"Ra-Raku-sama? Aren't you exaggerating?"

"As if, Marius. What else should I speak if not the reality? The head of the Bistolru was killed, the famous bodyguard squad of Cellia Buryuuser was annihilated, the informant that was infiltrated at the Demon Lord army was killed, and the Demon Lord's sister that had finally been captured ran away; all this was because Rook's judgment was naive. Because of that, the reputation of the prestigious Barusak household declined by a nose dive."

It was possible to hear the sound of the smoking pipe cracking.

Somehow, it seemed that Raku was putting too much strength on her fingers. Marius felt like the muscles of his back had frozen.

"Probably, he will lose this next battle."

"Su-such a thing! There is nothing saying that he will lose."

"No, he will lose. Marius, do you know the reason why he is attacking Karkata?"

"That would be..."

Raku was silently glaring at Marius.

Raku's height only reached to his shoulder, but she was giving off an aura that made it

look like she was looking at him from above. Desperately trying to make his head work, he started to think about the reason why Rook went to capture Karkata.

“Hm... What should he do to get some sort of advantage...?”

Saying this much, Marius realized something. Opening a map in hurry, he localized the position where Karkata was. Karkata was a hill surrounded by a grape plantation, but going to the other side of that hill, straight ahead, one would shortly arrive at a certain prospering port city.

With his voice trembling because of his own discovery, Marius said the answer.

“Perhaps it is because it is close to the port city of Perikka that had been captured a few days ago since it would be possible to establish a base there for the recapture of Perikka city?”

“That’s only the surface.”

Marius’ idea was rejected. Because he had confidence on that answer, he became a bit down.

“Why would it be?”

“Actually, it is so that he can get his hands on that grape plantation that grows there.”

“I see, it was th... What?”

Marius was about to nod, but suddenly, he noticed something strange. As if how Marius had his mouth wide-open was funny, Raku started laughing.

“Right, right, it’s a stupid reason, right? It seems he wanted to sell the wine made of grape so that he could get some funds. Hey, it’s a stupid reason, right? If it is about getting money, he should already have mountains of it at his own territories...”

“...Hadrn’t Rook-sama already been producing strong liquor beverages?”

Marius asked full of doubts.

He had never tasted any strong alcoholic drinks, but when he asked his alcohol loving friend that would participate at samplings of newly created products, apparently wine was an drink that would make the throat sting. He laughed, saying it wasn't to the point of solely being a drink that was agonizing to drink, but he seriously shook his head at that. It was without doubt one that would make you cough, but it was a high-grade beverage that would bring about a smooth and complex taste to the mouth. It was a product of high praise that wasn't found anywhere else even if one was to search for it around the world and didn't have enough stocks at the market.

...But Marius didn't drink alcoholic drinks, so it didn't matter to him.

“Umu. That's right. When I asked him about it, he said that beverages were important to receptions and had uses in diplomacy. And so, he needed to get something of good quality. Hmph, even though he said that alcoholic drinks were no good until he became twenty years old. That's just stupid; he is a really just a stupid little brother.”

Raku kept ridiculing her brother for a while.

But once she stopped smiling, all that remaining was an elder sister full of grief.

“However, although he is a stupid little brother, that's where his cuteness comes from. ... He is worthless, but it would be regrettable if he were to perish at this battle.”

“...If that is the case, if Raku-sama were to rush over there and help him...?”

“What are you spouting? That would be just spoiling him!”

Raku kicked Marius. Taking a sharp blow at his ankle, Marius groaned in pain. Without even looking at the groaning Marius, Raku started to diligently write a letter.

“Besides, if I was to move the army as well, father wouldn't remain silent. This battle is also for the sake of him clearing his name. It is a fight for Rook, who embarrassed the Bistolru and the Buryuser and covered the name of the Barusak in dirt, to regain his honor. ...It would be a pain if I were to intervene in a bad way just so that I would get

father's antipathy. There is no other way besides secretly helping him."

Her father's face came to Raku's mind.

To be continued... -.-"



# THE ANXIETY OF AN ELDER SISTER(PART 2)

His tone of voice was gentle, but he was actually very strict. Neither Rook nor Raku were a match to their father. Although he didn't display this behavior after he retired by old age, his rigidness was still in good health. They still had never directly received his true anger. There were many times he got angry at them, but it was a gentle anger of something like "Hey, don't do that"; it wasn't his true anger. It was different from anger of things like "You can't leave the bread half-eaten" or "Pay more attention to the training, ok?", but true anger.

Strictly speaking, it was the anger of the times when they caused any losses to himself or the Barusak household. It would be an anger caused by something like when breaking a pot that was a heirloom or dropping coffee at his books. But as if this kind of anger was still below that, because he didn't want get more angry himself or because he was too angry, he would scold them through letters. The recent incidents at Myuuz and Derufoi, it felt like he was angry enough for it to be called his true anger, but even so he sent his anger through letters.

When Raku was thinking about his true anger... It was in the meaning of Rook physically being injured.

Just like how her stupid little sister had been thrown away.

Probably, if Rook fails this time, he won't see the tomorrow. As his elder sister, she needed to avoid that at all costs. Regardless of what kind of thing he had done to receive it, she didn't want to see her little brother dying.

"Marius, take this and send it to Rook... No, send it to his close aide, Mary. We are talking about Rook after all. He will say something like "But my strategy is perfect!" or something and not pay attention to it."

Raku gave the well sealed letter to Marius.

Thinking about the words that were said to him, he silently put the letter in his pocket.

“Ha, understood.”(はっ)

“Use a fast horse. If you depart today, it should be possible for you to catch up to him before he arrives at Karkata.”

“Ha!”(はっ)

Giving a light nod, Marius immediately went his way and rode his horse to Karkata.

---

The footsteps of war were approaching.

From the expectations of a soldier that was assigned to scouting, without having any changes to their numbers, the enemy army should be getting to a position that will be possible to see them with the eyes by today. Originally, it should have been about now that they started to launch attacks. However, differing from Riku's intention, the preparations for the siege were steadily progressing.

They were taking great care of the pigs, and so that even if anything unexpected was to happen to the pigs, they were also starting to take care of their sheep. Although the ordinary citizens and merchants inside the fortress all had anxious faces, the soldier's enthusiasm for the siege and morale were high.

“It will be soon. The time they come to attack.”

While sitting on his chair, Kraut was waiting for any notifications. The faces of the people that were under the rain gathered waiting for the conclusions of the meeting all seemed to be splitting open by the tension.\*1

“Ha, we are ready to go anytime.”(はっ)

“Let’s show them we will endure, whether it is five years or ten years.”

Riku, who was sitting at the lowest seat, was looking at all this with cold eyes.

She thought of ideas to end the war quickly somehow, but none of them were good ideas. All of that just ended up with the days passing by.

“Don’t put up a gloomy face like that.”

Vrusto, who was standing next to her, patted her shoulder. Those feelings were only in her mind, but it seems that all was exposed by her expression on her face. Riku let out a small sigh.

“It makes me want to. For them to go for a siege from the beginning...”

“Well, war isn’t just flashy slaughtering. We need to be attacking the weaknesses of the strategy of the spiritualists too, you know?”

“If it is a enemy that would be showing their weaknesses, though.”

Currently, the defeats of the enemy had been piling up. No matter what, it was impossible to think the enemy would hold back in taking measures for this next battle. Rather, they would be attacking with the resolution of even dying for the sake of the succeeding of the attack. Riku wasn’t able to relax.

“Re-reporting!!”

It was right at that moment.

Roppu jumped into the room. As a member of the reconnaissance squad, he was supposed to be looking out for the enemy’s movements right now. It didn’t seem like he was hurt, but he had an expression on his face that was weird for some reason.

“What’s the matter, sergeant major?”



To Riku's question, Roppu answered it with a trembling voice.

"Th-the enemy... The spiritualist army isn't coming here. They ignored Karkata and kept advancing towards the mountains."

"Wh-what did you say?"

Vrusto's shout resounded through the meeting room. Not only Vrusto, but everyone inside the meeting room raised their voices in surprise. With eyes wide-open, Kraut looked at Roppu.

"I-is... this true, Sergeant Major Nezaarand?"

"Y-yes. It's the truth."

"I can't believe it... For it to not become a siege."

"Let alone a siege, for us to not need to have a war is good."

Everyone became relieved by the war they had just avoided for some reason. But then, a weird question arose.

"But, why did the enemy..."

Putting her finger onto her chin, Riku started to think.

"Going on from here, there should be the Karkata's plains and the Ryushion mountain range, right? Perhaps, they are planning on going through the mountains?"

"...But, at the other side of the mountain..."

At the moment Vrusto had said that, Riku arrived to a conclusion.

“Sergeant major! Do you have a map?”

“A m-map?”

With Riku’s orders, Roppu opened his map.

It was a simple map, but in there, there was the thing Riku wanted to know about.

“At the other side of the mountains that are ahead of the Karkata plains... It is Perikka city.”

With the demons seizing their biggest port city, the income of the kingdom decreased. In that case, them coming to recapture this was not weird.

“No, but if they wanted to attack Perikka, shouldn’t they do so from the sea? Because, going through those mountains is next to impossible.”

“Yes, although I was distant from them, I didn’t see any kind of equipment for travelling through mountains. Looking at their other equipments... It didn’t look as if they were making preparations for going through the mountains.”

Vrusto and Roppu presented their arguments. Of course, those were good points. But then, why did they ignored Karkata and kept advancing?

“When climbing a mountain, there isn’t any way other than going in a line through a single path-de gozaruyona?”

Right at that moment, Asty muttered a few words.

Although it wasn’t to the point of there being only a single line, it was impossible to climb a mountain with a row formation.

Asty’s words added color to the meeting.

Standing up from his chair, Vrusto put his fist up.

“That’s right! Right now it is the time to attack the enemy! We need to show them what’s up with them ignoring Karkata!”

This declaration changed the mood.

The people that were until now obsessed with the idea of going for a siege suddenly had their views changed.

“That’s right! That was an insult to us!!”

“Immediately prepare for departure! It will be war!!”

Everyone started to hurry. The center of all that commotion was Asty. Riku was still glaring at the map.

“...I feel as if there is something wrong...”

The people at Karkata getting angry by being insulted by being so openly ignored feels like something very possible to predict. But even so, it didn’t look like they were setting a bait by ignoring them.

“There must be... Some kind of reason.”

“Hey, lieutenant commander Barusak! You too should start the preparations for departure!”

But her line of thought was interrupted.

With his angry voice, Kraut had sent her orders. While holding herself back from clicking her tongue, she looked at Kraut.

“I am not certain about the details, but, this is a trap without doubt.”

“Are you sure? Are you not? In that case, attack. If you don’t have the confidence, I can set you at our rearguard.”

At that moment, Riku noticed.

The strangeness of the glint of his eyes. They were somehow unnatural. It wasn’t only Kraut, but also the other demons that managed this fortress and Asty as well.

“Second lieutenant Vrusto, this is...”

“Yes... What’s with all this?”

Vrusto’s face had become pale.

It was as if there were something moving Kraut and the others... The glint of their eyes were very strange. Perhaps, that curious shine in their eyes had something to do with the reason for why the people that were so obsessed with the siege easily changed their opinion. Krauth shouldn’t have been stupid enough to send the whole army to attack just because he was insulted considering the possibility of all them being killed. Unfortunately, Riku didn’t have the time to think about the reason all this was happening.

“Vrusto, do some preparations for us so we are able to immediately retreat should something go wrong. And also...”

Riku was whispering at Vrusto’s ears.

Although it was obviously a trap, stopping their frenzy was already something impossible. She didn’t like the idea of going for the siege, but she hated the idea of throwing oneself in a trap even more. But since all this was already to this point, all she could do now was to do her best in surviving through it.

“We are departing!!”

Since he had given the order, within only two hours, they had finished preparing.

The twenty thousand men Kraut led all rushed out the gates while raising battle cries.

As if they were looking at the victory that was in front of their eyes.

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“...In the end, that’s how it went.”

Rook snickered.

Asty Gortoberuk, who was eager for a battle of revenge for Gortoberuk, became the center of all this, making the lord of Karkata going after them leading his army of sixteen thousand men.

First of all, there was no way they would have their pride harmed because they were ignored. But Rook had already known about this development... Rook knew how it went in the game.

“Hahaha, they are just like Takeda Shingen.”\*2

“Who is that, young master?”

Rook ignored Mary’s question.

“Turn around! To the army of small fries!”

The ones coming to attack his hundred thousand strong Barusak army, which waited at the plains without climbing the mountains, was an army of fifteen thousand soldiers.\*3

With them being lured by the bait, all there was next was destroying the army that was going out of their fortress unbeknown to the situation.

But Rook still didn’t know about the actual number of soldiers, nor that his sister who was thrown away was at the enemy side.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 35**

# THE BATTLE AT KARKATA PLAINS

“You said they aren’t climbing the mountain!?”

Somebody raised a voice in surprise. The spiritualists weren’t climbing the mountains. On the contrary, they were waiting at the plains, preparing to catch them off guard.

Because of the surprise, Kraut, who was leading the army, became speechless. The triangle shaped formation that was splendidly set was looking at their direction. In its rear, where was the base of the triangle was, there were many big flags raised and fluttering in the wind. Probably, the enemy’s general was there. Kraut, who had his predictions being completely wrong, could only gaze at it shocked. Because of the shock, he became unable to command his army.

“Don’t lose your minds-de gozaru!”

The one that raised her voice in his place was Asty Gortoberuk. As if she was full of confidence, despite it being her first campaign, she put up a majestic attitude.

“I’ve learned it from honored grandfather-de gozaru. Against an enemy that comes attacking you, you need to spread your army like wings and have the enemy fall between them.”

While extending her arms, Asty explained the formation. ...So to speak, it was the crane wings formation. The difference between their war potential was clear. It wasn’t possible to believe they would be able to win. But once you step onto the battlefield, the best thing to do is to fight; they had to struggle no matter what.

“Umu, then, it will be as Asty-dono had said. Everyone! Spread into two wings and encircle the enemy!!”

Together with his voice, the shape of the army changed.

Kraut, who was at the front, went to the rear, and Riku’s army, who was at the rear, went

to the front. Giving a glance to the flags of the enemy and becoming surprised of the family behind the army with astounding numbers, she unconsciously got her eyes wide-open.

“...Those flags. There is no mistake.”

As if it was natural, the corners of her lips raised. All of the flags fluttering above the enemy were all from the Barusak family no matter how one would look at them. That army was probably formed by spiritualists and mercenaries. It took money to raise spiritualists. Although they were a spiritualist family, there were also children, that just like Riku, didn't have talent. That's why no matter how big that army was, half of it weren't spiritualists. And so, great part of the enemies coming were nothing more than mercenaries. But even so, it didn't change the fact that they were allied to the Barusak.

“Sorry. It doesn't seem like I can go easy today.”

Without saying that to anybody, she muttered those words as if to say them to herself. With this overwhelming difference in numbers, there would be no meaning to it if she were killed because she went easy just for her “pleasure”. Without giving special treatment to the Barusak, right now, she needed to deal with slaughtering them just like any other spiritualist families. Looking at the soldiers she had brought along her, she raised her voice.

“Probably more than half of that army are not spiritualists. It's only common mercenaries. Until I give the signal to retreat, kill to your heart's content.”

As if agreeing to Riku's words, war cries resounded.

Now was the opportunity to start the fighting. The ones that went forward were the Barusak army. As a huge wave, the Barusak army was coming. The two armies of different shapes clashed against each other. Saying like that, it feels like the demon army was going to be engulfed in an instant, but things wouldn't end like this that easily.\*1 Riku was glaring at the soldiers, who were charging without any care.

“Since you are so eager to die, you can be glad you will.”

While raising their voices, as if wanting to engulf the demons, the army advanced. With a smirk, Riku was mowing down left and right with her halberd.



“I will personally behead you.”

In an instant, many bodies were split and blood showered the surroundings. As if her voice was the signal, the other demons swung their own swords or spears, or even their fangs and fists at the upcoming spiritualists. She cut off the head of the foot soldiers, she cut soldiers in two halves vertically, and sometimes she would cut their torso and take out their organs.

But even so, Riku was unsatisfied. The enemy wasn't the Bistolru, nor the Buryuuser. Of all enemies, she needed to treat the Barusak the same as other spiritualists. This fact was scorching her insides.

“What's the matter? Is this all of your power?”

While smiling like a lunatic, Riku rotated her halberd. Her face was having a makeup of spilled blood, her red hair was even more soaked and her armor was dyed in red.

How many several people had she cut? Losing the sense of time, she was swinging her halberd in accord to her instincts. But then, she heard Roppu's voice next to her.

“Lieutenant commander!! Soon, it should be the time to retreat! The right wing had been broken!!”

It was a voice filled with panic.

Thrusting at the neck of the spiritualist that was in front of her eyes, she cut his source of air. The few minutes of destruction she had weren't enough, but it couldn't be helped if she was at her time limit. Sweeping away with the halberd that was at the neck of that spiritualist, she turned her horse around.

“We are retreating to the walls of the fortress of Karkata!!”

At the same time she had said that, as easily as turning the palm of one's own hand, Riku's troops turned back. And then, they ran straight to the way they came from. The other troops also started retreating. There was nobody that liked the idea of dying. As if they were being attracted by it like a magnet, all of them started running towards the fortress.

“Do-don’t run-de gozaru!! Why won’t you fight-de gozaru!?”

Asty was infuriated. Clicking her tongue, Riku placed her halberd next to Asty’s neck. Maybe because killing intent had been directed to her by an ally, Asty’s complexion changed.

“Wh-what is it-de gozaru? Are you going mad-de gozaru?”

“I’m sane. Whether it is numbers or morale, we lose. There is no way we can waste soldiers here for no reason.”

“Bu-but...”

“No buts. That’s an order from your superior. We are pulling back now.”

Asty’s expression of anger changed to one of confusion. Perhaps if their positions were reversed, she would want to question Riku about the reasons she stated. But right now, it was difficult to be having a talk. Pulling Asty, Riku hurriedly retreated to Karkata fortress.

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Looking at how it went, it was clearly the spiritualist’s victory.

At the rear of the army, Rook was very. Of course, there was no way he didn’t take precaution for whether he would fight. Rook prepared himself as to be able to readily draw his sword so that he would be able to deal with Asty whenever she was to come at him in a suicide attack.

“The enemy has started to retreat. What should we do?”

Mary quietly asked. Shaking his head as if saying “good grief”, he stood up.

“For them to start retreating so soon, they don’t have any fighting spirit... Is there anyone;

a demon that would charge at us putting their life at stake?”

“There isn’t. The whole demon army is retreating.”

“Eh?”

Rook bended his neck.

If his memory was correct, by this timing, Asty would refuse to retreat and would come to attack by herself.

“Not even a single one?”

“Yes. Should we go after them?”

But Rook didn’t pay much attention to that. Because Selestinna had lost the war for some reason, supposedly, Gortoberuk hadn’t been killed. If so, Asty wouldn’t have as many thoughts of having revenge. After pondering about that, Rook rode his horse.

“We are following after them!”

“Yes! Follow after them!!”

Mary rode her horse together with Rook.

They were hurriedly following after the retreating demons. But perhaps because the timing Rook decided they should follow after them was too late\*2, the demons were able to arrive to the walls without much exhaustion. It was possible to see the demons quickly going through the gates.

“Hm?”

And at that moment, Rook noticed... one more thing that was weird about that. Close to the gates, there were “things” lined up. They were animals numbered about five hundred that were being led outside by the demon soldiers. It was about five hundred pigs. With

them having something covering them, even by looking from the distance, it was possible to see them shining with the reflection of the light. Why were they taking away those pigs? It was a development that didn't exist in the game. But rather than becoming troubled by wondering what all that was about, before that, Rook sounded the alarm to his miscellaneous knowledge.

They prepared a great number of pigs that were covered in something, and all of the demons were standing inside the fortress. And then, themselves, who followed after them... Their formation being a close formation... With all that, there was only one conclusion.

“Shit! Ru-run away!!”

“Why is it, young master?”

By the time Mary asked him, it was already too late.

The demons lighted the pigs that were covered in oil, and at the same time, they released the pigs, hitting their butts with all their strength.

In that instant, the pigs that became covered in fire were pushed down the hill. In general, the image the pig had about being able to eat anything and being lazy. Putting it in other perspective, imagining them as anything but a delicious meal was difficult.

But the pigs that were closing in to them didn't differ to wild boars. Becoming unstoppable once they broke into a run, it had a power that was capable of easily destroying a firmly made fence. Therefore, once they started running, it was next to impossible to stop their vigor.

“Re-retreat! Retreat!!”

The pigs, which were food, were turned into dreadful weapons in an instant.

The balls of fire that were raising agonizing cries were coming towards the Barusak army.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 36**

# WHERE THE RESPONSIBILITY GOES TO...?

It was like a wave of fire.

The pigs that were covered in fire were releasing a savory smell as they ran down the hill. In that instant, the words “what a waste” came to Riku’s mind, but shaking her head, she shook off those wicked thoughts.

Looking down at the tragedy from the castle walls, as if to jeer at it, Vrusto let out a whistle.

“Uwaa, scary... This is not something someone can survive from.”

Vrusto’s face was a bit pale.

The scene happening bellow his eyes were fitting of being called hell. On contrary to the good smell it did, that method of attack was filled with cruelty. There were some spiritualists that realized what was happening and desperately pulled back, but there were others that kept on with the attack, being dazzled by the victory that used to be in front of their eyes, and were assailed by the fire. Being ran over by the pigs, they were being scorched by the fire with their voices of anguish resounding.

But it wasn’t really something tragic.

This was a war, and these kind of things were possible to happen. Besides, the ones burning in agony were the spiritualists from the Barusak. It was obvious Riku would get happy; there was no reason for being upset.

“But was this really the only option?”

“If you don’t go to this extent, you won’t win battles.”

It happened at the moment when Riku was casually muttering that. Kraut and his subordinates approached. Their face was far paler than Vrusto's.

“Second lieutenant Vrusto Asuteroid!! Was it you!? The one that let the pigs run away!!”

While pointing at Vrusto, Kraut was shouting. It was possible to see his mouth was trembling all over. Riku stopped Vrusto, who was about to say something, signing with her hand. And then, she gave one step forward.

“Yes, I was the one that ordered him to.”

“What? You say you ordered him to do that?”

Kraut's bloodshot eyes were now turned to Riku.

“You... You lost your mind!! You let the pigs we took great pains to gather! And you even put them on fire!!”

“It was for the sake of winning.”

Riku flatly declared.

Apparently, Kraut was getting mad, although for appropriate reasons. But she didn't care about something as trivial as that.

“Before we departed, I left five hundred men to second lieutenant, and ordered him to put fire onto the pigs and send them to the spiritualists once they confirmed everybody had pulled back. In order to make up for their overwhelming difference in numbers, I decided it was necessary to use the pigs.”

“Wha-wh-wha!!”

From Riku's flatly explaining, Kraut started staggering as if he became dizzy from standing up too fast.

“You, you... Didn’t you think about how it would affect the siege with that?”

“Yes.”

This time, nearly five hundred of the pigs that were at Karkata were used. In the animal pen, the number of pigs remaining were enough to be countable; it was in an empty and desolated state.

From the start, Riku was against the siege war. Perhaps that was why it was difficult for her to hesitate from doing that.

“I judged that there was no need to have that great amount of pigs. Even in the worst possibilities, it is going to be a war that having one or two groups of pigs is enough.”

Saying that, Kraut’s face became red with embarrassment. Right now, it felt like if someone was to drop water onto him, it would become vapor. Clenching his fist, Kraut was glaring at Riku.

“However, lieutenant commander Barusak! For you to have planned this strategy, doesn’t it mean you already knew the enemy was going to set a trap at Karkata plains? In other words, not only you had the resolve to risk having the soldiers that didn’t know about the plan to die meaninglessly, doesn’t it mean you have even challenged my command!?”

While spitting, he said in an angry voice.

As expected, even Riku couldn’t hide her irritation from these statements. Being taken by the anger, it was a miracle she didn’t draw her halberd.

“I had warned about the possibility of it being a trap before. But the one that dispatched all the troops... Was you, Kraut Zavar.”

Even so, Riku had her hand on her silver sword.

Of course, because they retreated early, the casualties were small. But they weren’t zero, and even some of her subordinates died. Among them, there were some that died a death



that could be considered meaningless.

But, of all people, she didn't want to hear these things from the man that was in front of her eyes.

“To choose to go to battle, you must have the resolve to die. Pointing our swords at the enemy, the enemy will also be aiming for our necks. Someone will die; somebody dying is something obvious. I'm not planning to complain about these things...”

The reasons for someone to be willing to fight was individual to each one. In the battlefield, there were many reasons for people to die. The person didn't have enough strength, had bad luck, and many others. She didn't have the intent of accepting beautiful ideals to the point of trying to make it so nobody dies. But she really needed to say that out loud.

“But who was the one that threw the soldiers in there? By being completely oblivious to the trap, who was the one that wasted their life with meaningless deaths? ...If you don't know, I will tell you. It is the person who leads the army.”

Each of the soldiers were assets of the Demon Lord army. The one that handled those was the person who takes care of his own army, the commander. Riku's subordinates too were nothing more than soldiers she had borrowed. Whether money is wasted or troops are misused, all the control is entrusted to the commander. In this case, the one that decided on that bad battle plan was Kraut, the commander. Riku also had some responsibility for not being able to stop him, but ultimately, Kraut, who decided their departure to the battle, was the one to shoulder the responsibility.

“...This is already the battle field; it's not some old tale. Realize the real world and properly lead your troops.”

Saying only that, Riku turned away from him.

The subordinates of Kraut that were next to him also became speechless. Moving away from the walls, she went straight to the place her army was stationed along with Vrusto.

“Hey... Didn't you say too much?”

Roppu, who suddenly appeared next to her, said in a low voice. Riku kept looking to the front.

“If I didn’t say that much, he wouldn’t be careful of other traps.”

And said only that.

Without doubt, Kraut, who was the lord of the place, was her superior. She couldn’t deny she had spoken too much and without using any honorifics. There was how a part of what she had said was spoken full of ardor, but if it was that much, it should still be polite to some point.

With that, she expected his decisions to become a little bit better.

“Well, with all that, we shaved off ten or twenty thousand? Their morale also probably decreased, so this is a victory!”

Putting his hands behind his head, Vrusto happily started to hum.

Saying that they got twenty thousand of them maybe was exaggerating, but there is no mistake their morale was reduced. When they were carried away with their victory, suddenly, hell descended. Facing that terror, their morale not decreasing was what would be strange.

“Well, without doubt we won the first battle. Because we pulled back early, we didn’t suffer much damage.”

“Aren’t the pigs not being included in the losses?”

“They were tools required for the win.”

To Roppu’s question, Riku gave that answer as if it was nothing.

Before noticing, the sun was setting and the moon was showing its face. Very soon, it would be night. While thinking about that, Vrusto put his arms around Riku and Roppu’s shoulders

“Hey, since we had a big victory, why don’t we fill ourselves with drinks?”\*1

The muscular arm was entangling with their necks. Because Vrusto was pressing Roppu with strength, his eyes were becoming white. Letting out a sigh, Riku shook of Vrusto’s arm.

“That’s no good. Even though we won, we can’t lower our guard.”

“Ha? Isn’t it fine!! To drink only a bit!!”

“This is a war. The enemy might attack back at any moment.”

Riku remembered at the time she was at the Rein fort.

After recapturing the fort, because she loosened up, she came late to help. At that time, if she were to notice the battle at Myuuz castle and decided to depart even a bit sooner... Perhaps the war would have reached its conclusion faster. Perhaps she would have the opportunity to make Toudo suffer even more than he did.

Even if one were to say it was a victory, that was just a single victory. It was different from winning the war itself.

“Brace yourselves; it will be night patrolling.”

Taking along Vrusto, who was mumbling complaints and Roppu, who gave a sigh, Riku started the patrolling around Karkata.

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The surviving soldiers of the Barusak made their base at the Karkata plains.

Their numbers were approximately ninety thousand. Whether one should look at it as losing ten thousand soldiers or only losing ten thousand soldiers; by simply looking at the number of soldiers, the answer would be the former, but in Rook's case, it was the latter.

"I wasn't able to end the war, and also many capable soldiers were killed."

It was different from the game.

There wasn't any development like that in the game.

In the game, the war was supposed to be concluded with an overwhelming victory to the spiritualists, just like the battle of Mikatagahara.\*2 Even though he expected that by this time he would be dealing with the event to add Asty to the harem after taking prisoner of her, who although wanted revenge, was a very kind person... But why had he lost many of his subordinates, lost the battle, and was now crying inside his tent?

"It's my responsibility. I, I..."

It hadn't been going easily like it was in the game. But even so, he didn't think he was going to lose the battle; because it was the world of a game, it was stranger if that didn't work out. For what reason was all this happening like that? Why wasn't anything going as Rook planned?

Putting his hands on his head, he started to groan. With Rook in this state, Mary gently approached him.

"Young master, you should take this as a lesson. Young master is still young and is liable to be careless."

"...Mary."

"You won't be losing your life at this time. Young master is the person succeeding the Barusak household and will eventually stand at the top of all spiritualists. Right now you should calm your heart and treat your life with value."

Like a mother, Mary gently hugged him.

Because of that gentleness, Rook started to cry. In the game, among all heroines, Mary was the one most devoted to Rook. From now on, as the next Barusak head, and as the hero that will fight against the Demon Lord, he needed to start behaving himself. After this lost battle, many other battles were waiting. But only for now... He wanted to act like a spoiled child in Mary's embrace.

"Alright, Mary... Thank you."

"This isn't much for you to be thanking me. ...Now, young master. Mary has one wish she would like to ask."

Rook didn't notice, but Mary's eyes were burning with anger.

The Barusak prided army had taken losses from the attack of the demons... More so, by the inferior creatures the pigs were.

And then, they made Rook, who she took good care just as if he was her little brother, sink in sadness.

Because of these reasons, she was quietly burning with anger from the demons at Karkata.

"Please, lend me some soldiers. I received a plan Raku-sama had secretly sent."

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 37**

# RAKU'S SECRET PLAN

Rook eyes became wide-open.

Since his childhood, Mary had been looking after him. She was the one that took care of him more than anyone. Her actions of now were also for his sake. That's why he was a bit anxious.

"A secret plan from Raku-ane? I haven't heard anything about it."

He didn't want his beloved Mary to die because he took actions that didn't happen in the game.

To begin with, because he lost his battle at the Karkata plains, he couldn't use his game knowledge for some time. Now, all he could do was only wonder whether he could still use his knowledge for the other events. Unfortunately, in this battle at Karkata... He could only rely on himself to capture the fort. It was like exploring an unknown land.

Of course, Rook believed himself that he wasn't incompetent. He had the knowledge he learned in his previous world, and since he had been reincarnated, he had been learning about many matters as the next head of his family. But this was actually the first time he was going to make a decision without relying on the knowledge of the game. In this sense, this would be his first campaign.

Thinking about that, rather than having an amateur at war badly meddling with its matters and having their losses aggravated and more soldiers losing their life, it would be better to rely on the plan of a person that was knowledgeable at it. But he couldn't carelessly accept it and lose Mary. While Rook was endlessly worrying with these thoughts, Mary took out a letter.

"Yes, yesterday at afternoon, I've received this letter."

While saying that, Mary gave Rook the letter. Rook quickly gave a glance to the letter. On the letter, the plan was written with messy letters that matched how Raku was.

“Hey, right here... It’s written that you shouldn’t let me know about this letter, though?”

Saying that, Rook pointed to the part where it was written: “If you let Rook be aware of the plan, he will become annoying, so act by yourself”. Mary showed a bitter smile that looked apologetic.

“I showed young master this letter because young master didn’t seem to be having any good ideas. Besides, haven’t young master always said that? The “everything is Hou-ren-sou”.”(TL note: this is the abbreviation of Jyouhou-Renraku-Soudan, which means, information, reporting and asking for advice. Apparently, this was some kind of motto of some company. I don’t know if the company still exists, since this motto was created at the 1980’s.)

Mary raised three of her white and slender fingers.

Hou-ren-sou meant information, reporting and asking for advice. This was something his previous world father would always be saying. In his management of his territories, he had always been enforcing these three things. Exchange of information was more important than anything; if anything unexpected happened, it was possible to immediately deal with it. At the beginning, with nobody knowing about the practices of hou-ren-sou, everyone would wonder what was that while bending their neck in confusion, but with ten years passing, anyone became used to it.

Mary, who could be said to be Rook’s trusted retainer, would faithfully follow the Hou-ren-sou.

“Young master, please, rely more on me. Please, ask me advice for all your worries.”

“That’s right... Thank you.”

With his reliable trusted attendant being here, Rook was able to calm down. He was able to relieve a bit of his anxiety.

For some reason, he had been causing many bad events. The heroines, Selestinna, Rebecca and Kurumi were killed, and his soldiers suffered heavy losses because of the pigs. But Rook was still blessed. He was tended by Mary’s gentleness. Once again turning his eyes to the letter, he started to read it.



“Hmm... [To begin with, despite their dirty appearance of beasts, there are many of their races that can disguise themselves and be just like a human. As the result, they can easily walk among the humans inside our territories with no concerns as long as they hide their special traits of their bodies.

In this plan, it will be the reverse, with the objective of causing turmoil from the inside. asdf Once there is one drop of suspicion. Fortunately, you have many times their number; all they can do is wait, passing their time inside that cramped castle filled with fear. Once you drop a single drop of suspicious inside, rest will be easy.]”

Reading the last letter, Rook let a “oh” in admiration.

“In other words, we will infiltrate someone in there?”

While folding the letter, he Looked at Mary. Mary calmly nodded.

“Yes. It’s a fact I don’t want to accept, but among the demons, there are many whose appearance aren’t too different from us humans.”

“I know that. But, by any chance, if they discover the person infiltrating doesn’t have a demonic like trait... No, not really.”

Rook denied his own thoughts.

This time, at the town of Karkata they were attacking, there were a few humans coexisting with the demons. As far as it goes, It’s prohibited that humans and demons work together in the Shiidoru kingdom, and so, the town is considered to be one which there are only demons in the documents. Even the main character of the game didn’t know there were humans living in the town until he won the battle and captured the town.

For instance, even if one didn’t have any demon-like trait, one could simply insist to be one of the humans living in the town.

“But it will be difficult to send the spy to infiltrate inside the fortress.”

Kurumi, which would be very useful for situations like that, wasn't here anymore.

Not only didn't he have any spies at the demon side now, but infiltrating the Karkata castle also seemed to be difficult.(TL note: It's weird, but it's written like that...) Perhaps it might be possible to go up the walls through a gap in their defenses. But the walls were of stone and properly maintained. Since it was usually possible to use daggers as a footholds by putting them at the gaps between the stones, there wouldn't be any problems going up the wall. However, even looking at it from the distance, it was possible to see that the stone wall clearly wasn't one which doing that would be viable.

It would be a different story if there was a Ninja class that could jump over the walls, but unfortunately, there weren't any classes like that, and so didn't exist in the reality.

"Don't worry, young master. I already have something prepared."

"Eh!?"

Fast.

Her response to the present issues was too fast. Since he had lost last battle, only a single day have passed. But even so, Mary had already thought of their next strategy. With Rook being surprised by that, Mary continued with her words with a face filled with confidence.

"I'm deeply sorry, but I thinking of it as a measure, I... Actually, at the time when the demons had retreated, I sent three people... Three spiritualists of the Barusak disguised as demons to infiltrate their base. They were distracted when they ran away, so the demons probably didn't notice someone slipping in."

Rook turned his eyes to Karkata's castle.

It was a firmly built fort surrounded by a plantation of matured grapes. In there, there were already three Barusak spiritualists inside. While Rook had been worrying about his troubles, they were hidden among the enemy's army.

"Although our soldiers suffered some losses, the difference in numbers is still overwhelming. Probably unless they think of doing something reckless, they won't come attack us."

“Yes, I know that. Initially, they were planning on doing a siege after all.”

“That’s why instead, we will have their gates opened.”

Mary whispered next to Rook’s ears.

Rook nodded full of satisfaction at her plan.

“I see... They will light a fire somewhere. And using the turmoil...”

“They will open the gates from the inside, and after that, it will be our victory. I’ve already instructed them to light the fire and open the gates tomorrow at night.”

Saying that, Mary kneeled next to Rook’s feet. From her face, the wry smile from before had faded away, and having the looks just like one of a general... She had a face that was full of seriousness.

“Please, lend me some soldiers. I will definitely capture that hateful fortress.”

“...Mary.”

Rook closed his eyes.

Using this plan, the chances of winning were high. The demons had won a battle they originally weren’t supposed to win. By this time, they are probably drunk with the beverages of the highest grade, and once the next day comes, there will be soldiers suffering from the hangover. At the night of such day, it wouldn’t be weird if they were to loosen their guard somewhat. They probably wouldn’t expect that the spiritualists who had just suffered a great defeat would launch a night attack right on the next day.

If he uses this plan, he will definitely win.

But Rook was still hesitating.

...If the plan Raku sent to him ended up being a bad one, it was quite possible for him to lose Mary.

It wasn't because she was one of the heroines; it would be fine saying it was closer to the feeling of love for his family as if she was his sister or mother. Among the people Rook knew, Mary was the person he could trust the most, and therefore, someone he didn't want to lose.

But there was no more time to be hesitating.

There was nothing else to do other than wishing her luck.

"Mary...Come back alive, ok?"

Opening his eyes, he touched Mary's cheeks.

They were very warm and soft cheeks. Being touched by Rook at her cheeks, Mary opened her eyes wide in surprise, and then closed them, filled with happiness. It was possible to see her cheeks vaguely becoming blushed.

"Yes, of course... There is no way I can leave young master alone."

"It's a promise. You must definitely promise me, Mary!!"

Rook took his hands off Mary's cheeks.

He didn't want to lose any other person important to him. If he was to lose her, he would probably go crazy. Taking away the muffler that was wrapped at her neck, Mary put it on Rook.

"Tonight is cold. Please, use this to warm yourself. When I come back, you will need to give me back, ok?"

Rook looked at Mary's figure going out of his tent.

At the same time Mary's small back left the tent, the lonely air of the night blew inside.

At the center of the tent, alone, he sighed. There was no way the tent he was in right now was wide. But once Mary left, it abnormally became spacious.

"You must definitely come back, Mary."

Rook muttered to himself.

Together with the remaining warmth of her cheek at his palm and the muffler he was grasping....

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 38**

# THE REBELLION DEEP AT NIGHT

The reason for Asty's absence was much more stupid than she had expected.

After going out of Asty's room, Riku let out a big sigh.

Today, Asty didn't come to the training. Even among her subordinates, Asty could be said to be a very diligent person. She would enter the training field before the sun had risen and would keep swinging a sword or spear. But today alone, Asty didn't show her face.

Riku herself didn't really care whether she would be coming to train or not. However, she was Riku's subordinate, and she was also entrusted to her by Gortoberuk. Riku wondered that perhaps she had got high fever and couldn't leave her room. But if she was to only say this and leave it just like that, it would become bad to Riku's position, and it would also affect Leivein's reputation. That's why she ended the training early and gave a visit to Asty's given room.

But in the end, it was all needless worries.

"Yo, ojou-chan."

Turning around, she saw Vrusto, who was leaning at the wall. Probably he was waiting for Riku to come back. After lightly raising her hand as a greeting to him, both of them started walking side-by-side.

"And then, what is the reason for that girl to be absent? Was she sick?"

"...Self-confinement."

Riku dropped her shoulders.

It felt to her as if she had suffered some kind of loss just for how she had been worried about Asty and had gone after her. Asty wasn't suffering from any sickness. She was

healthier than she could ever be. She was reading a book of strategies while sitting on a chair.

“Haa? Confinement?”

Vrusto raised his voice in a surprised manner. In a low sound, Riku continued speaking.

“Yes. It looks like she thinks she has responsibility for this last battle.”

From what Asty said, she thought she had responsibility as she was the one to make reasons for the troops to be dispatched to Karkata plains, and so she wasn't going to leave the room until it was the right time.

Of course, it was a fact that she had part of the responsibility. However, all she did was nothing more than giving her opinion. The fault lied on Kraut, who accepted it without seriously thinking through.

“I told her she should go polish her strength rather than doing that self-confinement, but she wouldn't listen, saying to let her be for at least three days. Anyway, it seems the Gortoberuk house has some family motto that you should seclude oneself to accept your wrong deeds or something.”

“I guess this is diligent? What to say...”

Vrusto was showing a surprised face. It also felt like Riku had a face similar to his.

“Even though there are things more important than family mottos...”

Rather than family mottos, Riku hated family itself. For the pride of her family, Riku was thrown away, and ended up with sad memories. Looking how she was able to meet Leivein, perhaps in this perspective, it had been a good thing. But in the end, even after ten years had passed, she still looked at the Barusak with hostility.

That day from ten years ago... The memories of her being betrayed by her father, engulfed by the waves of the sea and being carried to the seashore were as if a thin mist was surrounding it. She didn't remember the details, but she felt she was full of resentment and hatred. Even now, those thoughts were lying at the depths of her heart. Even after ten



years had passed, the fence called Barusak still restrained her. Probably, if this were to continue, she would become its prisoner for the rest of her life.

Thinking about that, her mood became a bit dark.

“Who knows?”

Vrusto’s answer was extremely short. Taking out a cigar that was at his breast pocket, he started smoking it. Riku hated the smell of smoke. Not only she hated the smell, she was sensitive and would make her cough. Right at the moment Riku was about to open her mouth to complain, it happened...

“Hm?”

Suddenly, she felt a suspicious gaze onto her back.

Looking behind her, there were three soldiers. The three were very similar to humans, but because they were wearing armor of the Demon Lord army, they were definitely demons. She didn’t mind too much about that point, but she did mind about the way the three were looking at her. It was a bit different from the looks of despise she had already become used to. Rather than despise and contempt, the feeling of surprise that was being given off was stronger.

“What’s the matter, ojou-chan?”

Looking at them once again, the trio disappeared as if they went hiding. Because they didn’t have a face she remembered of, she knew they weren’t her subordinates, but soldiers from Karkata. But even so, it felt they were involved with something.

“Did you see those three men that had just gone to that corner a little bit ago?”

“Hm? Ah, those guys that were glaring at you? ...Aren’t they just jealous of ojou-chan because ojou-chan got many achievements despite being a human?”

“It would be good if that was the case.”

Perhaps she was a bit too much self-conscious. While thinking about it, she shook off the suspicions from her mind.

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It was at today's night that the incident occurred.

By the time the moon was at the sky, it happened that sharp screams were being raised from the pig pen.

"It's a rebellion!!"

"There is a traitor among us!!"

"It's fire!! It's burning!"

Together with these words, the blazes of the fire were going up to the sky. The straw spread at the pig pen had suddenly caught fire, now with the fire dazzlingly illuminating the night sky. The soldiers that were keeping watch, by seeing the fire and the voices that were saying it was a rebellion, became confused and made their own commotion.

"How noisy, really."

Wearing her armor, Riku left her room. Right as she turned to a corridor, she saw Vrusto and Roppu, who had gathered many of her subordinates and were rushing over to her room.

"L-lieutenant! It's serious!!"

"Whatever it is, it looks like rebels have appeared."

"If you become in panic, you will be doing just like those guys want you to."

Riku rebuked the two, who were somewhat flustered. It was at times like this that it was necessary to deal with the problems with a cool mind. Riku gave a deep breath, and then, she looked at the direction the screams were coming from. Perhaps it happened because the air of the winter was very dry.\*1 The improvised pig pen was being scorched while it rose sounds of being burnt.

“Second lieutenant Vrusto, take control of the soldiers and suppress the commotion. There should be about three people sparking off the commotion. Cut down those people that are being annoying.”

“Understood.”

Lightly lowering his head, Vrusto immediately headed out at fast speeds. In an instant, Vrusto vanished from the place he used to be just like the wind.

“But , why do you say there should be about three people?”

Roppu asked her this awkward question. While looking at the fire, she flatly replied.

“First of all, it was because hearing from the voices, there should be about three people screaming.”

“Eh? Weren’t you sleeping at this time?”

“I didn’t feel like sleeping, and also didn’t feel like training. Rather than that, how do you think they were able to get in here?”

While still gazing at the fire, she asked Roppu. While lowering his eyebrows, he earnestly started to ponder about the question. After the screaming voices were raised two more times, Roppu spoke about his doubts.

“To climb the walls of Karkata... Is impossible. It is too tall for someone to forcibly try to climb it up, and even if there was someone from the inside sending down a rope for them to climb up, the guards would have noticed.”

“If that’s the case, then does it mean the gatekeeper had betrayed us?”

“It shouldn’t be it. The role of being the gatekeeper are given to demons that had been working at Karkata for generations.”

“Yes, even if he temporarily betrayed us, he would have chosen the timing to do that in his own accord. At least, tonight’s patrolling is very rigorous for him to do that.”

“...Right. I think it would have been more effective to cause turmoil after the banquet happened.”

With all that said, then how did they get in?

First of all, why did they start a fire today? Since it was easy for them to infiltrate, it would have been better to wait to cause the confusion after their vigilance cooled down. It was just as Roppu had said: the confusion would have spread even more if they had started the fire after everyone was drunk at the banquet.

“To begin with, why would they want to cause turmoil? Because, since it is only two or three people, even if they cause disorder, because we would be able to immediately suppress it, there would be no meaning to it.”

Roppu said those words worriedly. He was boiling with all these questions. Slowly moving her finger to her chin, Riku started to think. The fire was getting worse, and now was spreading to the pen the sheep were at.

“Wouldn’t it mean that there wouldn’t be no meaning to the disorder if it wasn’t caused today?”

“You mean the people infiltrated and the people outside are not in conditions to be properly cooperating with each other?”

“That’s right. In other words, they had previously decided that it was [today] that they would act.”

“Uhh... This means that today, the enemy troops knew that at this time, they would light a fire, and also knew that the fire would more or less be able to cause disorder. Would it be something like that?”

Riku nodded at Roppu's doubts.

"Yes. ...In other words, it means they are coordinating with the outside troops."

In wars, it was the standard to cause turmoil and attack. Most likely, they would use the gap given from all the turmoil and open the gate from the inside, having their troops come inside. By the time Riku finished summarizing her thoughts, Vrusto came back.

"Ojou-chan. We caught the three people that put fire onto the pen."

"In the end, it was three people. Where are they?"

"Right now, they are being dragged to the plaza. It looks like it will take some time to put down the fire. It had spread a lot after all."

Being led by Vrusto, together with Roppu, Riku headed to the plaza. There, the three men were tied with ropes. Curiously, they were the three soldiers she had seen before at dusk. It seems like they were soldiers of the Barusak that had slipped in.

"So the meaning of those gazes was this."

Riku understood now. She was that worthless child they had thought to be dead, but for some reason, she was at the Demon Lord army now. There was no way for them to not be surprised. They probably had had a similar opinion to Toudo at the time. Looking at the Barusak soldiers that were glaring at her, she thought about those things for a moment. However, right now, it was not the time to be pondering about things. Taking her halberd, she cut the three people's head off without saying anything.

"Wai-, ojou-chan!? Shouldn't we have pressed them for information!!?"

"Before we could do that, they might have self-exploded. It might have been fine to search whether they had bombs or not... But right now, time is precious, so there was nothing else to do."

In reality, she wanted to torture them thoroughly.

She wanted to peel their skin, crush their bones and torture them until they pleaded to her to kill them. But right now, she didn't have the time. She had plenty of time to indulge herself in this pleasure later.

“Immediately gather the soldiers at the gate.”

“Ha? Why is it? Before extinguishing the fire?”

Even now, the fire was vigorously burning.

If they don't put off the fire soon, it will spread even more. If the wind's direction was to change, it was possible that even the residential area might catch fire. But all Riku did was give one glance to the fire. It was as if it would be more efficient if they were to let the fire spread. Raising the corner of her lips, her eyes went back to Vrusto.

“We will be using it instead. This huge signal fire.”\*2

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 39**

# SCAREDY RABBITS

Deep at night, the moon wasn't at the center of the sky anymore.

From inside the walls of Karkata, the flames of the fire were being lifted. The fire that was burning under the darkness of the night made the walls illuminated. The screams that told of there being a rebellion or there being a traitor, being carried by the wind, were heard even from bellow the hill. It looked like the confusion wasn't being well handled. At the same time, the fire was getting worse, having the sea of flames getting wider and wider. And during all the confusion, the gates of the fortress quietly opened.

“...As expected of Raku-sama.”

While looking at the situation using binoculars, Mary gave a faint smirk.

“Everyone, it is the time to attack!”

Mary gave the command to the ten thousand soldiers she was leading. With the orders given, the army rushed straight over Karkata's hill.

All was for the sake of offering this victory to her beloved Rook. Because of things he said about how they should be friendly to demons, it made his lack of resolve as the head of the Barusak family. But this didn't matter. This naivety was part of Rook Barusak's charm; all it was needed was to once again have him set his resolve.

That's why, from now on, she decided to devote herself on being of use to Rook. She would aid Rook by having him walk the path of the domination of the demons.

“Attack!!”

While raising their voices loud, they rushed through the gate. War was either winning or losing. She would be now attacking through the gap made by the confusion and overpowering the enemy with numbers. There was no way the brave Barusak soldiers would lose to the demons, which had their command in chaos. Not only Mary, but



everybody believed in their victory without suspecting of anything.

“Shoot!”

That was until they had heard that sharp voice coming from above.

The soldiers that were hiding on the walls, on the roof of the residences and on the balconies at the second floor of the houses simultaneously drew their bows. A great amount of arrows poured down at them all at once. All of the Barusak soldiers had convinced themselves that the demons were disordered because of the fire inside their base. There was no way they would have expected they would get attacked despite how the gate had opened. They were too overconfident about that. Therefore, they couldn't do anything about the arrow rain that had been waiting for them.

“Kgh!”( くっ! )

The arrows pierced the Barusak soldiers one after another. Mary, who was riding her horse at the front of the army, wasn't an exception. Being showered by the arrow rain, she became like a hedgehog. Looking at their leader, Mary, who fell down her horse, and then looking at all their comrades being pierced by the arrows, the Barusak soldiers that were following behind all immediately had their faces becoming pale. As if they had noticed that if they were to waste their time standing there, they would be the next to become hedgehogs, the Barusak soldiers turned back without hesitations.

“Re-retreat!!”

The Barusak soldiers started to retreat at full speed. Looking at the Barusak soldiers acting like that, Riku started to laugh loudly. Where could the brave attitude they had before have gone to? The scene of the soldiers going down the mountains disorderly trying to flee each on their own to save their life was so funny to Riku to the point of her holding her stomach.

“Aha, ahahahahaha!! For them to run back to their holes so fast, they are just like scaredy rabbits. No, rabbits still have some cuteness.”

More than anything, rabbits had good ears.\*1

Just because the gate was opened didn't mean they would be able to easily invade the fortress. They were probably happy their plan had worked out, but they should have been more attentive after entering the enemy base. This was the reason for the Barusak's defeat.

"We are going after them. Follow me."

Riku gallantly rode her horse.

By following after those Barusak soldiers, they would be able to quickly get to their main troops. The number of soldiers that had attacked were approximately ten thousand. The other soldiers at the main forces are probably lazing around by now. To be assured, she considered whether she should be away from them by some distance when following after them, but looking at the pale faces the soldiers had made at the time they had retreated, it was possible to see that what happened to them was without doubt completely out of their expectations. At least, the way they turned their tail and ran didn't look like a performance. About eight or nine out of ten, they were indeed running away.

"Now then, let's go."

Riku licked her lips. Riding her horse, the sound of the wind being cut through passed near her ears. The sound of the wind, the footsteps of the demon soldiers following behind her, the too much defenseless Barusak encampment that was in front of her eyes: all that made Riku enthusiastic.

Before long, the curtains were about to be raised to her next moments of bliss. Riku was excited to the battle that was about to happen before her eyes.

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It was like hell.

The tragedy of blood being washed with blood was once again spreading through his view. It was as if he was dreaming.

But he still knew that it wasn't a dream. Rook believed Mary was going to achieve success

with the plan and went to sleep in his own pavilion. But his slumber suddenly came to an end. He received a notification that the demons were doing a night attack. Desperately jumping up from his bed, he wore his armor. But by this time, it was already too late. More than half of his army had already suffered devastating losses by the attack. Until the demons reached to Rook's pavilion, it was probably only a question of time.

“Uu, urgh.”( う 、 う つゝ)

Without being able to endure the nausea, he fell to the ground. All was engulfed by a mood heavier than anything he had ever felt, and the air was filled with the smell of blood that made one choke.

He knew this was the characteristic ambience of a war. He had went to war many times and should have already become used to it. Such air felt like it was wrapping around his skin.

“Rook-sama!! Please, give the order of retreat!!”

One of the mercenary soldiers hurriedly said to him.

It was a soldier he didn't remember the name and didn't make an appearance in the game. It looked like he was a soldier that had a position above average, but this kind of thing didn't matter.

“No, here... I need to take responsibility and fight...”

Rook unsteadily got up.

All this was his responsibility. The one that befell hell onto the Barusak army was none other than him. And so, there was no way he could run away.

“If it is me, if it is me, I can do something about it. ...That's right, the me of right now is Rook Barusak after all.”

As if saying it to himself, he said those words.

The himself of right now wasn't that ordinary university student. He had reincarnated in a gyarū game as the main character; as the unparalleled genius, Rook Barusak. And so, he definitely is able to get out of this situation somehow. Rather, what kind of main character wouldn't be able to do so?

"If it is me, even with the battle already in this state... I can do something about it. ...I can't run away; I must fight."

"What are you saying!? We need to retreat and reorganize the troops!!"

But he mustn't run away.

Rook was also worried about Mary. Under this situation, Mary's survival was to the point of being hopeless. But there might still be an unexpected miracle. Perhaps she might still be alive after being taken prisoner. He needed to somehow find where his beloved and precious Mary was.

"But, we mustn't run. Because I..."

"No, we need to retreat!!"

Rook unconsciously trembled at the mercenary's threatening attitude.

His menacing look was like a devil's. If a young child was to see that face, the child would immediately run away while crying. With the scary face that made him tremble all over, Rook became speechless. And facing against such attitude, the soldier was pressing him by showering him with words.

"Everything is over once the commander dies. In order to clear away the regrets of the people that died, you must survive. If you die now, there is no way you would be able to face the people of countless generations that had died before!!"

Saying that, the soldier grasped Rook's hand. Forcefully making him stand up, he started to move while pulling Rook. Rook became at the soldier's mercy.

"Now, please, ride on this horse. Or did you forget how to ride a horse!?"

“Ah, no, I didn’t.”

Somehow riding the horse, Rook turned back and gave one more glance to Karkata’s direction.

All was covered in a sea of fire, and he wasn’t able to see whether the soldiers were spiritualists or mercenaries, but probably, among the screams and yelling of people, there were some of people that were related to the Barusak family. Those voices made the hair on his nape stand up. In the end, he couldn’t bring himself to start having the feeling that he should retreat.

“...Sorry. In the end, I can’t run away.”

“Rook-sama, give the orders of retreat. This is not cowardice. There is courage in retreating now”

The soldier rejected his words. His voice felt mechanical and lacked emotion. Rook ignored the soldier’s words.

“If, if I don’t confirm whether Mary is alive... Yes, Mary might still be alive. So, I must save her. I, because, I!!”

“Mary-sama wouldn’t wish for Rook-sama to die here!!”

The sharp words gorged his chest. Together with pain, anger started to boil inside him. He didn’t want that soldier he didn’t even know the name to speak of Mary as if he knew her. Mary didn’t wish him to die? This was obvious. Is there any human that wouldn’t be sad with their family dying? If there is a human that wouldn’t be, then it can’t be considered a human. It would be an emotionless robot that looked like a human.

He hated how the soldier spoke of the obvious in a tone that was as if he knew everything, and more than anything, the way he acted that seemed to have decided that Mary had already died made him extremely angry.

“I know this even if you don’t tell me!! That’s why I...!?”

When he raised his face and saw how the soldier was glaring at him, he immediately closed his mouth.

The soldier's expression was very severe. If one was to ask what kind of face a devil would have, it would be this one. His eyes were bloodshot and his lips were twisted; the teeth that he was biting his own lips with looked like fangs.

But from those eyes that were full of anger, a single tear fell.

"Please, give the order of retreat. Let's survive and wait for the opportunity to get revenge. If it is you... It is possible."

It was a declaration he had made because he cared deeply about the Barusak family.

Even now while Rook was surprised by his words, it was possible to feel the enemy rapidly approaching.

"Run away! There is a very strong demon out there!!"

"It's the devil!! A red devil!!"

"D- don't fear!! Although it is a demon, it is female! Go! We must kill it somehow!!"

"It's impossible! There is no way we can kill that red haire... Gwa!"

Those voices that were closer to screams were quickly getting closer and closer. The sounds of weapons clashing weapons also added up to its brutality. If he was to run away, it needed to be now. It was as like if he was to lose his chance now, he would be engulfed by the war.

Closing his eyes for an instant, Mary's face came to his mind.

Mary would always be following Rook two steps behind him.

For Rook's sake, she was the one that worked the most and for the most time. She would always be beside him smiling and would always give him advices. When he felt down, she would politely encourage him. She would always gently hug him. Mary was a precious person to him, and despite her being a maid, to him, she was a member of his family. Rather than Raku, who would always be busy at her laboratory, or Riku, who was already gone, he felt Mary like she was his elder sister.

Perhaps, Mary was suffering at that burning fortress right now.

Or perhaps, she had already been released from her suffering and went to that place.

“Sorry, Mary. I will avenge you no matter what.”

When he opened his eyes once again, all the hesitation had vanished from them.

“We are retreating. We are retreating to our lands!!”

The army Rook Barusak was leading now only had half of its initial numbers.

He needed to return to his territory; it couldn't be helped that his prestige wouldn't be shown mercy to once he went back to the divine royal capital with his army covered in blood and dirt. Having their dirtied flag being raised, they proceeded with the retreat, leaving to the royal capital. Rook's retreating figure was very much miserable.

And then, somebody spoke to him.

“The genius that fell to the ground.”

Were the words.

And then, once again, that certain person narrowed its eyes and muttered.

“天才の目の色が変わった”\*2

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 40**



# **.NOSTALGIC MEMORIES**

In Karkata's castle, everyone was cheerful with the victory.

They couldn't bring the enemy general down, but they destroyed more than half of their army and made them retreat. There was nobody of the demon side that expected they would have had such a huge victory despite their great disadvantage in numbers.

Everyone crowded the plaza. They were drinking booze, playing instruments, singing songs and celebrating their victory. It was a party the soldiers and the residents were mingling together. But there were also people that weren't participating in the party.

Together with her subordinates, Riku went down one of the stairs inside the fortress. The stair, which was connected to the dungeon, was filled with an air that was chilly by a different meaning to the coldness of winter. There wasn't any blowing wind, so it shouldn't be possible for one to feel cold. However, the mood given by the dull stone walls and the steep stairs that didn't have handrails would make the heart freeze in a different meaning.

Suppressing her hurry, Riku carefully went down the stairs step by step as if to ascertain about her foothold.

"Ah-ah, the other guys should be enjoying their drinks by now, you know? Even though I also wanted to drink..."

From behind, it was possible to hear Vrusto's complaints. But Riku didn't answer him. She didn't have the patience to be answering each of his complaints that its numbers had already amounted to so many she didn't know how many there was anymore. With Riku ignoring him, Asty answered instead.

"This is also part of the job-de gozaruyo, second lieutenant Asuteroid. It is said that soldiers must complete their duty without faltering-de gozaru."

“Stupid, it’s not that. It’s only that the one that to do most of the hard work in this battle was me, you know? But even so, I didn’t get to participate in the party and was even made to go down to this stinking dungeon.”

Vrusto let out a sigh that felt a bit forced. But Riku, whether it was Vrusto, whether it was Asty, whether it was Roppu, who was nervous and had his gaze unsteady, she didn’t intend to be following anyone’s conversation.

Originally, Riku had planned to go down the dungeon by herself. The one she was going to meet was the enemy. But she couldn’t have people think she was going to have a secret talk with the prisoners or whether she was trying to let them run. That’s why she had brought these three people she could trust.

“Don’t worry; it will be done soon. It is about to die after all.”

Riku muttered in bother. She was acting the way a child that had the toy taken. Even though she obtained what she desired, all of them would break down. It was such a boring development. Going down the last step of the stair, Riku looked ahead to the dark corridor.

At the beginning of the corridor, there was a jailer sitting on a chair. When the jailer noticed Riku, he stood up and saluted her.

“Nice to meet you, lieutenant commander Barusak. I’m called Tipus. I’m the one that manages this area.”

“Thanks for the good work. Now then, where is it?”(TL note: I really don’t know how I should be translating things like ご苦労様)

“Ha, I will be guiding you there from now on. We’ve collected all her possessions, so there should be no danger. ...However, from what the doctors had said....”

“I know. It was like a miracle for it to still be alive.”

Riku flatly answered back to the jailor explanation.

Each footstep loudly echoed. A much more chilly air enveloped Riku and the others. The small light at the lamps hanging at the wall were dimly illuminating the dungeon.\*1 After

passing by many doors, the jailor stopped his feet in front of a certain one. With experienced movements, the jailor removed the bar that was locking the door and while raising a sound, he opened the door.

“It is here.”

“Thank you.”

After giving a glance to the jailor that had respectfully lowered his head, Riku entered the cell.

It was a cell less dirtier than expected and only lacked a bit of cleaning. The place gave a very straightforward feeling by having nothing except a single bed. Lying on the somewhat dirty bed, there was a human who was covered in white gauzes and bandages. The person was just barely breathing. Her voluptuous breast were slowly going up and down. Most of her face was covered in bandages, but it seemed that her eyes and mouth were fine just barely.

When Riku came close to her, her eyes had slightly opened, looking at Riku as if trying to remember something.

“It’s been a long time. Have you been fine?”

As if she had met a friend after a long time, Riku spoke. After doing that, the slightly opened eyes suddenly became wide-open. It was as if her eyeballs were about to fall off.

“Riku...ojou...sama?”

“Oh? Mary is still calling me ojou-sama.”

In surprise, Riku put her hands close to her mouth. And then, by Riku putting a smile a lady of the Barusak household would, Mary’s face lost its color. The cast-off that had thought of being dead was alive. Just by that it was already worth being surprised. And more than that, with how Riku had come to question her at the dungeon of the enemy, Mary must be very confused. With a blank look, Mary opened her mouth.

“Why, are you here?”

“For what reason does Mary think I’m here?”

As if she was worried about Mary, Riku extended her hand to her body. And then, she pressed her hand at a bandaged part which was reported to her of being the place she had suffered the worst wound. Doing that, as one would expect, Mary twisted her face in pain to the extent of having her face losing its color.

“...!!”

“For you to be so full of wounds... It did hurt, didn’t it? Ah, you are also very injured here. Are you ok?”

Riku thrust her finger at the wound as if she wasn’t noticing Mary twisting her face in anguish. While showing a worried face, in her heart, Riku was happily pressing the places where Mary was wounded the most. Because of that, Mary started to heavily breath from her mouth.

“Ah, I’m sorry. Perhaps I touched a place that hurt?”

After being filled with satisfaction by Mary’s suffering, she put a face that was as if she had just noticed what she had been doing. But she didn’t take her hand away from Mary’s body. Instead, she pressed with more strength. In Mary’s eyes, traces of hatred started to show up. But there was no way Riku was going to finish it only with that. Riku moved her hand to Mary’s cheek.

“I’ve always wanted to meet with Mary. I’ve always thought of giving my gratitude once we met again. Yes, yes, for example, that girl really liked to say that...If I’m not wrong, it was... While saying something like “Don’t hinder young master’s path to dominance, ok?”, she would do something like that, I guess?”

While loosening her eyebrows as if she was pitying Mary, Riku dropped her elbow at Mary’s belly with all her force. Of course, it was at a place where the wounds were shallow. It would be fine even if Riku was to hit a place with deep wounds if it was by her, but if she was to do that, it would lose the fun. It would be a waste if Mary was to die because Riku had hit her in a bad way.

With that unexpected attack, Mary shrieked in pain. Because of this piercing shriek, Riku felt the urge of cutting her head off right away. But she barely endured it. The fun time still had much more to go.

“Ah, I’m sorry. I made a mistake. It wasn’t at the belly. Was it stepping on the foot? See? In this kind of way.”

While saying that, Riku grasped Mary’s right foot which was fractured when she fell off her horse and with all her strength twisted it with her hands. A scream that was so loud to the point of Riku wanting to immediately shut her mouth was raised. Even though she was too weak to scream before, how could it be possible for her to have this much strength to scream remaining? Humans were made more resilient than expected.

“Didn’t she also used to say “don’t use your position of elder sister so you can get close to him and trick him” or something like that? They were really good memories. Mary really loved Rook. That’s why for his sake, you’ve always been threatening me. You would step on my foot just like that... Ah, sorry. It wasn’t the right foot; it was the left one, right?”

Roughly letting her right leg go of her hand, she twisted her left foot that, similarly, had been fractured as well. Her left leg was so full of bandages that it wasn’t possible to know which bandages were for the bone fractures and which were for the arrow wounds. But it didn’t matter to Riku regardless which of those each bandage was for. In the end, all that was important was knowing that this was a place had been heavily injured.

While she was thinking about what she should do next to enjoy herself, she heard the voices of Vrusto and the others talking.

“...Uwaa, as expected of Ojou-chan. Really nasty...”

“I see, it’s a torture technique-de gozaruna. It will be good for learning-de gozaru.”

“L-learning, you say?”

“Stupid. That is not torture or anything like that. It’s just that ojou-chan is very malicious.”

The three were speaking of many things on their own convenience. She turned back to say

something to them, but then she noticed that Mary's lips were moving.

"What happened... With young master?"

Because of that that quiet muttering, Riku reflexively spitted the saliva in her mouth in surprise.

She couldn't believe how she had the calmness to be worrying about her master despite being under this condition. While patting her left foot, Riku gave a cheerful smile.

"Do you want me to tell you?"

"Did something happen to young master?"

"Do you want me to tell you?"

While smiling, she repeated the same words. Those words felt like there was a storm to come. The face full of pain started to turn into a face closer to a savage one. Riku didn't find it fun. Despite how brusquely she had dropped her foot at the bed, Mary's expression didn't change.

"Whether it is the defeated soldiers... Or their general, even you should at least know... What kind of fate they have."

Of course, Riku didn't know what happened to Rook. Mary was at the Barusak army that invaded the fortress, so Rook should have been there too.\*2 But he turned his tail and run. He probably is alive. He most likely went back to his territory and is cowering at his own warm room by now.

But Riku wanted to see Mary's anguished face.

"Suc-Such a thing... Where, where is he? Is he alive?"

Because of how her words became mumbled, that was probably the possibility Mary most wanted to avoid. Because of her imploring tone of voice, Riku started to want to laugh. But she shouldn't start laughing at this time. While showing a bold smile, Riku kept

looking at her in silence. As she did that, Mary started to shout while coughing blood.

“Young master... Rook-sama. Is Rook-sama being treated as a hostage? I, I don't care what happens to me. It's fine even if I get killed. But, at least have mercy on Rook-sama!!”

“You are really noisy.”

Riku moved her hand to her silver sword. She wanted to cut the throat of that thing. If Riku was to do that, she wouldn't need to be hearing that annoying voice that looked like the grunts of a pig anymore. But if she was to do that, her fun time would decrease. That was a problem. It was extremely troublesome. Because she finally got a toy to play with, she needed to treat it well before it broke. After giving a deep sigh, Riku whispered next to Mary's ears.

“You won't care even if I kill you?”

“Yes. And in exchange, please, save Rook-sama!”

“This would be your wish, right?”

While giving a sweet smile, Riku put her hands on her pockets.

“...But you are about to die already. We were trying to keep you alive somehow, but aren't you already at a condition that just by speaking is hard?”

Being said that, Mary's face became gloomy. It had been right on the mark. While twisting her face as if what Mary had said was unforgivable, Riku dropped her gaze at her.

“Even if I were to take the life of someone that was like that, I have the feeling it wouldn't mean too much. After all, it is about to die anyway... Even if I were to speed up the process a bit, it wouldn't change much.”

“T-this, this, somehow overlook it, please!!!”

Mary was crying tears of blood. While raising a troubled sigh, she lifted her face as if she

reached to an understanding. And then, she extended her hand to Mary.

“I don’t understand the reason why you love Rook to this point. So, I will be asking this of you in a little bit different place. ...It’s impossible to move you in this state; right... Asty, Vrusto, bring the stretcher.”

Saying that, Asty and Vrusto prepared the stretcher. With the help of the jailer, the confused Mary was put onto the stretcher. Slowly being brought, they left the dungeon.

“So, why do you like him?”

While going up the stairs, Riku asked Mary. Being asked that, Mary’s face became a bit blushed. From her thin lips, very sweet words left.

“Of course... Because I want to see to what point young master’s future will go.”

Unconsciously, Riku’s eyes showed doubt. With a face that looked as if she was on a trance, it didn’t look like Mary was the same person that had been screaming in anguish a few moments ago.

“Future?”

“The future young master envisions is also my dream. Of course, even to me, some parts of it are difficult to believe in, but even so, I want to see young’s master figure leading all the people. While I walk alongside young master, I want to see the world young master will create. Serving young master and using my life for his good... is the meaning to my existence after all.”

Mary’s thin lips were happily moving.

Hearing those words, Riku suddenly remembered of Leivein. Riku wanted to fight alongside Leivein. She didn’t really know whether she would be dead until the next winter as that oracle had said, but she simply wanted to stand next to Leivein to that point. She wanted to be of use to him. Having this desire in mind, this last battle as well had been earnestly fought.

But Riku didn’t know.



What kind of future Leivein was aiming for, what were his goals; she didn't know about them.

"A future he envisions, you say?"

"Yes, the future young master dreams of."

Riku, who had been going up the stairs, stopped her feet. While thinking about the words Mary had said, she looked back the way she had gone through. The steep stairs went on so deeply that it wasn't possible to see its bottom without straining the eyes. It was as if all of that was only darkness.

"I need to ask about it too."

"To young master? This is very good. The ideal world my young master envisions is much more marvelous than any of the kings had don..."

"The world captain Leivein dreams of."

Interrupting Mary's words, Riku made a sign with her hand. Doing that, Asty and Vrusto laid the stretcher down. The reason why Riku had ordered them to go up the stairs wasn't possible to be understood at all. Mary looked at Riku in a strange way. And so, Riku returned her a smile.

"By the way, Mary. Do you know this?"

Riku took her hands out of her pocket. She was holding a golden brooch. Riku showed Mary the brooch that had the crest of the Barusak family in front of her eyes. Seeing the brooch that was slightly stained with blood, Mary's face froze.

"Co-could it be... Y-You!! Didn't you promise young master's safety!? That promise was a lie, right!!"

"What are you talking about? I don't remember anything about doing any promises."

In first place, there was no way Riku could have something Rook possessed at hands.

That was Riku's own brooch. Because she grew older, the coat she used to wear ten years ago didn't fit her anymore. But despite she thinking she would be throwing it away someday, strangely, she grew attached to it. Being troubled whether she would keep it or not, she only kept the brooch.

The herself of that time couldn't have ever imagined that she would be using her brooch in that way.

"Then, good-bye."

With all her strength, Riku kicked Mary.

Without being able to resist, Mary fell down to that steep stair that went on to the underground. Those stairs didn't have handrails. She didn't have anywhere to grab, although to begin with, pain was going through her whole body, and thus not being possible for her to do so.

When Riku and the others once again went down the stairs... It was possible to see Mary's figure with her limbs twisted in weird directions.

"Aha, ahahahaha!! It serves you right, it serves you right!! Hey, say something. Even though I was throw down from a cliff, I didn't die, you know? Could you understand my pain a bit? Hey! Hey! Hey!!"

She kicked Mary, who didn't say anything, many many times. While insanely smiling, she relentlessly kicked Mary. Without being able to stay still while seeing Riku act like this, Vrusto put his hand on Riku's shoulder.

"Hey, ojou-chan! This is already..."

When she turned back to him, seeing Riku's face, Vrusto became breathless.

Her eyes were like those of someone that had just seen a rock at the roadside. The insanity

that were in her eyes a few moments ago wasn't there, nor were there any signs that it had been there. All there was in her face was a bored expression.

“Ojou-chan...”

“Roppu, this one died. Call the group that deals with the corpses. Asty, can you put away the stretcher? ...It's not necessary anymore after all.”

“Y-yes.”

“Un-understood-de gozaru!!”

Roppu's and Asty's figures vanished in light speed.

Riku started to go up the stairs once again. She didn't turn back to Mary's corpse. Because of how she started to go up the stairs as if it was the natural thing to do, being out of his character, Vrusto quietly spoke to her.

“...That... Was it enough?”

“That? I don't care about that anymore.”

Riku's expression was like the one of a child that got tired of his toy.

Riku didn't have any interest in the dead Mary. It was because she was alive that Riku could enjoy her face twisting in anguish. After it died, that was the end. She felt as if she didn't get all the fill of enjoyment she desired, but she was satisfied enough. Next time, it would be the turn of the other Barusak leaders, who are a bit healthier than Mary. If possible, she wanted it to be either Raku or Rook, or her beloved and respected father.

And so, she didn't care about Mary anymore.

“More importantly, I need to search about what kind of world captain Leivein looks forward to. I don't know anything about captain after all.”

“...”

By Riku's answer, Vrusto became speechless.

There was nothing else left for Vrusto to ask.

But even so, Vrusto felt like he needed to say something to Riku. If he didn't tell her that now, by the way she had been going, he felt she would end up leaving something very precious behind.

As her babysitter, and as her instructor, he needed to speak to her. But when he was about to say something, a voice came from above the stairs.

“Lieutenant commander Riku Barusak! An envoy has come from the demon capital. You must quickly come to the reception room.”

“Alright. ...Come with me, second lieutenant Vrusto.”

Riku gave Vrusto an order to accompany her.

After still being troubled over it for a few moments, he shook his head. And then, he decided he should act talkative like his usual self.

“Ah-ah. Don't I have any breaks?”

“It's an order from your superior. Hurry up.”

“Yes, yes, understood... After that, treat me with some alcohol, lieutenant commander Riku!!”

Like his usual, Vrusto was acting talkative.

And then, he followed after Riku as if it was a bother.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 41**

# TIGHTROPE WALKING

## NEGOTIATION

Raimon Barusak was enraged.

He was burning in raging fire for Rook Barusak's incompetence.

Not only was he famed of being the genius that would only be born once each thousand years and was going to be the next head of the Barusak household, but also, behind the scenes, the progression on the marriage with the first princess had been going well; it was the son he had pride on. But Rook Barusak has caused their greatest defeat in history in the Karkata campaign. And even at other times, he had been doing varied disgraceful actions that hinted he could have thoughts of betraying the kingdom by making friends with demons. Raimon had been again and again overlooking all the fall of virtue that covered the Barusak house in dirt. Somehow, all this enduring had been piling up.

But with this historical defeat, his endurance dam had crumbled. It had been his limit. He didn't want to even see Rook's face, so he expelled him from the royal capital, but even so, he still couldn't calm down his anger. Raimon threw the beverage bottle Rook had given him to the floor.

"Father!"

As if to calm down his anger, she rushed to her father. There was nothing as much dreadful as her father's anger. If she wasn't to calm him down even if it was for a bit, he would take Rook's life just as he did with Riku Barusak. Only that she needed to avoid at all costs.

"You are too agitated. Please, calm down a bit."

Raimon glared at Raku. Because of his sharp glint on his eyes, Raku became motionless as if her feet had been sewed onto the floor. It felt to Raku like he was a snake glaring at a frog. While giving off cold sweat, despite it, she risked her life and looked back at her father.

“Father!”

“Raku... You know it, right? This is a problem concerning the honor of the Barusak family. My beloved daughter, it is necessary to remove that fool that covered honor of the Barusak in dirt.”

Receiving the anger of her father with his silent glare, Raku’s body started to tremble.

Her fear was much that she was acting as if there was something cold crawling around her back. But killing off her fear, Raku started to choose her words. If she were to choose her words badly, she would probably have her head sent flying from her neck. But despite that, she made her resolve. Kneeling in front of Raimon’s feet, Raku quietly spoke.

“Father, Rook is immensely famous with the populace. Specially with the females, from the commoners to the nobility. Haven’t the first princess been personally touching the topic of marrying with him? ...If we were to deal with him under these conditions, we will receive animosity from many people.”

“...But even so, I have set my resolve, Raku.”

Raimon was silently looking at Raku.

“Even if an authority had been healthily working until then, things like being affected by an unknown disease... can happen sometimes. By me saying that, Raku should know what I mean, right?”

“...Could it be you are telling me to use that drug that is still in development on him?”

Raku’s voice had trembled for an instant.

This certain drug had been locked deep inside one of the rooms of the laboratory. The development of the drug had already been terminated by Raimon, and although it is still at development stages, its effects had already been verified. Rook must definitely not take that drug. While putting up a calm facade, her mind was desperately

“...However, that drug has the effect of increasing the strength to the level strong demons would achieve. Of course, もちろん、対退魔師(政敵)用に改良し始めておりますが.....まだ確証はつかめません. (TL note: I don't know what this is talking about;-; . Well, it has something to do with politics.)

“Then, it is fine if you use another drug. It alright... If the drug is given by you, Rook will easily take it. I trust you will succeed... My beloved daughter.”

With a calming tone of voice, Raimon spoke those words. With the corner of his eyes loosening up and speaking in a gentle tone, if someone else were to look, the person would think he was just normally talking to his beloved daughter. But Raku noticed that his eyes weren't laughing. If he were to oppose Raimon more than that, there was the possibility of him dealing with Raku as well. Raku swallowed the saliva that was in her mouth.

“Father, I understand. I will do what I can. But before that, only for now... Can't this be put off?”

But Raku mustn't be defeated here.

Exhausting all her body and spirit, she was willing to make her father reconsider Rook's death. Because of how she could still speak the words of postponing Rook's death in such condition, Raimon's veins at his forehead popped up. Of course, Raku noticed that, but she ignored his anger.

“We can have Rook disposed of from the shadows anytime. However, Rook Barusak has great popularity. Also, he is a considerable addition in military might. That's why it won't be late for us to dispose of him after we made use of his every single drop of sweat and blood. Besides, a spiritualist that possesses that amount of talent is not something common. Don't you think it is a waste to get rid of him right away?”

“...Indeed, it is as you say, but...”

Raimon slowly moved his mouth. Raimon's great change in behavior didn't slip past Raku's eyes. The hatred burning in his eyes were wavering. As if she would not permit this opportunity to go away, Raku pressed on.

“Therefore, I propose to send Rook Barusak to the front lines. If he raise achievements, it



will be possible to elevate the reputation of the name of the Barusak family. ...And if he is to be killed there, then it simply meant that this was his limits.”

Raimon looked at Raku puzzled. However, he didn't feel the fear Raku had a few moments ago. Raimon's heart wavered. Comparing to the worthless except for her strength Riku Barusak, Rook Barusak was the owner of an overflowing talent any spiritualist would desire. His true feelings were that he didn't want to let go of Rook yet. That's why it was possible to have his opinion changed after this recommendation. As much as she could, Raku imposed herself.

“Father, please, reconsider.”

“...Alright. Rook Barusak will be sent to the front lines... He will be sent to Fert. I will have the preparations be immediately arranged. Raku should go back to your work.”

“Ha. Thank you for the reconsideration”(はっ)

Doing a light salute, Raku turned away from Raimon.

Coming back to her room, she saw Marius, her attendant, waiting for her. Giving one glance to him, Raku walked in direction of the laboratory. After taking her smoking pipe and putting it into her mouth, with experienced movements, Marius scratched a match, lighting it up.

“Thanks for your hard work, Raku-sama.”

“...Really, it is such a pain to confront against that guy.”

Raku took the match in a apathetic manner.

Raimon Barusak was the central pillar of the Barusak household; he is not someone that was easily bent. If she was to go one step wrong, perhaps she would have lost her life. Those negotiations were like tightrope walking. While being relieved of still having her neck connected to her body, she lighted her smoking pipe.

“But even so, is Rook-sama going to be fine?”

Marius timidly asked. Because Raku put her life on line, she was able to protect Rook. However, this would have no meaning if he was to die just on his next war. Raku repudiated Marius' concern.

“Nonsense. All is already fine now. It's obvious he will be winning the next battles.”

“Win, you say? However, those last times... Rook-sama has...”

“Don't worry. This will be the end of his bad luck. As you can see... I have already prepared a plan.”

Raku dexterously put her right hand inside her white coat. And then, she took out a letter. When Marius looked closely, he noticed that it was addressed to Rook.

“Eh? This... Have been prepared beforehand?”

“If I was to succeed in saving his life, nine out of ten... Rook would have been sent to Fert. It is the indomitable city one of the leaders of the Demon Lord army, Edgar Zerrik, governs over. It's a place great numbers of spiritualists had their life lost in these two hundred years. It's an extremely difficult place to capture, but it doesn't mean there is no chance of victory.”

While having confidence that it was a strategy that would victory this time, she declared. Looking at Raku acting like that, Marius became a bit anxious.

...It's not exaggeration to say that a great number of Barusak soldiers had died because of this last strategy Raku had thought of. Rook, who had adopted a strategy that was created by a scientist, was to blame, but Raku still had a considerable amount of responsibility on that. The three people that knew Raku was related to the great defeat at Karkata was nobody except for Rook, Mary, and Marius. As long as Rook or Marius didn't tell the truth, she wouldn't be investigated about this matter.

“...What is it, Marius? Are you anxious about my strategy?”

“Eh, uhh... It's no such thing, but... Err...”

“...Haaa. Marius, you are honest to a fault. Don't worry. Differently from Karkata, this time, it is a perfect plan without any inconsistencies. If you understand, then send this letter already.”

While Raku grumbling while being shocked by him, she threw the letter to Marius. Marius had a face of someone that still had something to say, but he left to send the letter despite that. In the corridor, only Raku remained.

“...Really, that a Marius. Doing unnecessary inquiries... Well, it's fine. I was able to accomplish my objectives.”

Raku muttered those few words.

The meaning carried by those words could only be wondered about. Unfortunately, there was nobody that knew the real intention behind them. While smoking with her pipe, she headed to her laboratory in a fast pace.

Without anyone having heard those mutters, Raku disappeared from the corridor together with the smoke.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 42**

# **.NINETY NINE BLESSINGS AND A SINGLE THORN**

The garden party organized by Charlotte would always happen together with the arrival of spring.

By the time the coldness of winter would lessen and the accumulated snow would melt and start to turn into puddles... Invitation letters would be being sent to all the parts. The only ones to be invited would be high ranking members of the Demon Lord army that had accomplished great contributions, and so, it was a distant world to Riku, who was only a mere field officer.

Normally, she wouldn't even be aware that this kind of event even happened. However, at the time when she was still affiliated to the Dragon Demon division, because Leivein had been participating to those parties at that time, she was aware that the high society celebrated the coming of spring. But she was merely aware of its existence; it was something unrelated to Riku herself. All the times, the one Leivein would bring together with him was Piguro, and was never her.

Riku had always secretly desired to be able to accompany him someday, but she had never even imagined she would ever be able to participate in such party and always believed that it was impossible for her to.

...That was, until she received the invitation from Charlotte.

“Really... If people have the time to be doing this kind of thing, it would be better for them to spend it on training.”

With her brand-new military uniform on, she was acting moody.

At the peaceful garden, there was an ordinary table. On the table, there were sandwiches made with plentiful of spring vegetables and other things like very high quality pieces of cheeses and fruits sprinkled in honey.\*1 Even comparing to when she used to live at the Barusak residence, those were rare and extravagant foods. But strangely, she wouldn't feel hunger. While rotating the glass full of carbonated water, she gave a deep sigh.

“First of all, why was I even called?”

“Hmm... I suppose it is because of the achievements after all-de gozaru.”

The one to answer to Riku's sighing was Asty. Until now, Riku had been going through nothing but battlefields. She was experienced with table manners in general, but it was the first time for her to actually put it in practice.

On this first time she was coming to the party, Riku choose Asty, who seemed to be used to these things, as the subordinate to accompany her. She is Gortoberuk's grandchild, and so, she should have experienced the high society. Right now, Asty was actually enjoying the banquet more than Riku was. Even now, she had a glass filled with wine on her right hand, and a beautifully designed plate with all sorts of food onto it on her left hand.

“The one to save my honored grandfather and to take the head of Selestinna Bistolru, and also to save Charlotte-sama, was lieutenant commander Barusak-de gozaru. Besides, the one to drive away the army attacking Karkata was also lieutenant commander-de gozaruyo. That's why, shouldn't it be better to not worry about the little details and have pride-de gozarou?”

To begin with, all of Riku's actions weren't for the sake of the [Demon Lord army], but for the sake of [Leivein]. However, there was nobody that could point it out by now.

“Ah, look, isn't this tasteful beverage that famed wine-de gozaru? Lieutenant commander should also get your share-de gozaru!”

“Although this is a good opportunity, I don't feel like drinking right now.”

Riku looked at the glass she was holding. The bubbles of the liquid inside were rising to the surface and vanishing one after another.

Even though just by going to the demon capital Taitas she already had to waste so much time, she didn't know the reason why she was at such lively place that didn't fit with her. Looking at the other guests, she noticed pretty much all of them were wearing a certain trend of clothes. People that were wearing military clothes like Riku were few.

In her mind, Asty was anxious. No matter who was to look at Riku, it was easy to notice she was bored. By being in a place like this with such a gloomy face, people might consider it as if she was picking a fight with Charlotte.

Because of this anxiety, she took out a letter that had been given by Vrusto Asuteroid before they had departed.

“Although he said it was a letter for in case something happened... Eii! This is the time to use it-de gozaru!”( ㄟ ㄟ い ! )

Carefully opening the letter, she saw that single line... The magical words used to control Riku written down.

“...Lieutenant commander!! Look, lieutenant general Leivein is there!”

“Thank you Asty.”

The instant Asty pointed out where Leivein was, Riku started running to the direction with an unimaginable vigor. With her depressing expression she had previously vanishing as if it didn't even exist, she made a face that seemed filled with happiness deep in her heart. She was like a puppy that was waving its tail with an incredible amount of energy.

Asty was shocked by the transformation of her superior. Because of how surprised she was, she became petrified, without being able to move for some time.

“A-as expected of second lieutenant Vrusto-de gozaru...”

While saying these words of admiration, she vacantly looked at Riku's distancing figure.

While being completely ignorant of Asty's inner thoughts, Riku rushed over Leivein.

Piguro was beside him as well, but Riku could see nothing except Leivein. He was wearing his military uniform that didn't have a single wrinkle on it and his heroic black dragon wings were full of luster. He was bearing an appearance more majestic than any of the demons gathered in the party, and seeing this manly appearance, Riku became proud of being his subordinate.

"It has been a long time, captain!"

Straightening her back more than her usual amount, she saluted.

Seeing Riku, as if he had become surprised, Leiven's eyebrows slightly rose.

"...I see, you were also invited. I've heard about your last achievements."

"Ha! It has been a honor."

Until a few moments ago, Riku had been regretting coming here. However, Riku wasn't regretting anything anymore. Rather, she felt it was good she had come.

"Are you enjoying the party?"

"Yes, I am."

"...You looked like you were bored a few moments ago, though..."

Piguro muttered his uncalled-for comment. In dissatisfaction, Riku thought that he should have called her if he had noticed her before. Riku glared at Piguro, but it was only that. Piguro was higher ranked than Riku. She knew well enough that it was better for her own to not brusquely refute him.

"...It has been some time, staff officer Piguro."

"You've finally gave your greetings to me, didn't you? ...I've heard about your deeds at Karkata, lieutenant commander Riku Barusak. No matter how one would look at it, it seems it had been a great victory. Apparently, the higher-ups had been talking whether to promote you to lieutenant colonel, and whether to reward you with a special medal."



Keeping with a serious face, Piguro was carefully saying words of flatter to her. Riku was silently receiving the praise. And then, Leivein, who seemed to be satisfied, also added some of his words.

“The great victory of this last battle has made Charlotte-sama very pleased. I am also very proud of you.”

“Thank you very much! I will keep working to my upmost sincerity for the Dragon Demon division.”

Those words of praise that went straight to her heart felt to Riku as if she had ascended to heaven. Her body was enveloped by a sense of euphoria that made her body warm. However, on the other hand, for an instant, she felt an unpleasant tingling feeling . Wondering what that feeling that disturbed her happiness was about, Riku started to think about it for a few moments.

“...Is there something wrong, lieutenant commander Riku Barusak?”

“Don’t make this face on this party Charlotte has organized. It raises suspicion of defiance.”

Piguro and Leivein both spoke to her. The moment Riku had heard these words, she was able to realize the cause of this feeling that was welling up inside her. She didn’t know its true identity, but she knew its cause it. And so, she should act to solve this problem. Turning her face to Leivein, she lightly lowered her head.

“...I am sorry, but... I have one question I would like to ask captain Leivein. ...Could I receive the permission to ask this question?”

“...This is something rare coming from you. Alright, I permit.”

“Ha. In truth... I would like captain Leivein to tell me about your ideals and goals.”

Although Piguro had made a face that seemed to be wondering why she had only asked him about this only now, he didn’t particularly care at all.

Raising her face, Riku looked at Leivein's eyes. Those eyes that had the color of the sky which makes her want to extend her hand to had the figure of the serious Riku reflecting onto them.

“For the sake of the ideals the Demon Lord has strived for, I will devote myself until my last drop of blood. That is my ideal and my duty.”

As if it was very obvious, Leivein spoke of his ideals.

For an instant, Riku felt she didn't understand what Leivein was talking about. On his eyes, the figure of the surprised Riku was being reflected. As if to explain, Leivein spoke.

“Riku, we are honorable members of the Demon Lord army. Therefore, isn't it obvious we would be fighting for the ideals of the Demon Lord? The weak die and the truly strong reign at the top. For the sake of having that world come true, we, the Demon Lord army, fight.”

Riku remembered her meeting with Leivein.

Leivein had easily defeated the slave traders she couldn't oppose. He accepted her loathsome red hair. Despite how she did not have talent as a spiritualist, he had given her a place she could use her own power to her heart's content. He gave her a place to live. But this was because Riku was strong. If Riku was weak, he wouldn't extend his hand to Riku at that time, and Riku would have died a dog's death at that alcohol stinking back-alley, or would have been forced to work as a slave until her death.

Leivein was stronger than anyone she knew. Even at that time at Derufoi, when he fought those spiritualists, he had handled tens of spiritualists by himself without breaking a sweat. Riku's feelings about his captivating strength went beyond simply aspiration and were closer to worship.

That's why Riku couldn't understand. No matter what, she didn't want to understand.

“In... in that case why... Why do you serve Charlotte-sama?”

Riku put the reason of her bitter feelings in words.

If he was to follow the demon lord, she would still understand. She didn't want to accept, but even since the time she was still living at the Barusak family, she had been raised hearing about the dreadfulness of the Demon Lord. Probably, he was the owner of a power much greater than Riku could imagine which could turn the tide even on the worst situations.

But then, what about Charlotte?

If she had a sword, she could be said to be strong. However, the only impression Riku had received was that she was just a little girl that couldn't fight. She was only a promiscuous little girl that willingly followed that spiritualist and let her escorts die, and after having brought over fifty spiritualists when she had been running away, she could only wait for the battle to be settled in Vrusto's shadow.

All Riku had seen of Charlotte until now was only that she was some weak demon that was the Demon Lord's little sister and would bring disaster. Even right now at this moment, with her strength, she was capable of killing her. If she herself was able to do so, there was no way Leivein wouldn't. Rather, in order to create the world where the strong stand at the top, Charlotte would be someone to eliminate.

"I see. Indeed, comparing to the Demon Lord, Charlotte-sama is weaker."

"So..."

"But the Demon Lord has accepted Charlotte-sama's strength. Therefore, Charlotte-sama leads the Demon Lord army as his substitute."

Therefore, he serves her.

With a gaze that seemed to say the conversation was over, Riku became unable to say anything else.

If Leivein had accepted Charlotte, no matter which kind of bitter feelings she had, she would accept her as well. No matter how much she was weak and how she was a dead weight that would wave her tail to the enemy, if Leivein was to say so, there was no other way except for her to accept her.

“Understood. Thank you very much.”

Riku’s head quietly dropped.

She couldn’t completely accept it. But she was able to know what Leivein’s ideals were. Only by that, she was already satisfied. There were no problems. Riku could accept the world that the strong ruled over the weak Leivein aimed for. Having the strong standing above the weak regardless of the family bonds was truly a wonderful thing. In order to have it come true, Riku would eagerly fight for Leivein.

Only, what she couldn’t accept was how Leivein recognized Charlotte, and by turning a blind eye on that only, everything could be easily sorted out.

Yes... In other words, all this was about was her enduring the pain of this single thorn.

“...Are you dissatisfied?”

Leivein spoke as if he had seen through Riku. In an instant, her complexion paled.

“No, there is no such thing!!”

In panic, Riku said in answer. But Leivein didn’t return her words. For a short while, Leivein was thinking about something while looking at Riku. A strange feeling of tension started to hang in the air. And at the moment Riku swallowed the saliva in her mouth due to that tension that felt like it was stinging her skin, it happened.

“Charlotte-sama! There is something I must report- nya!!”

The voice that had broken the feeling of tension between Riku and Leivein, and even the tranquil mood of the meeting, resounded through. Not only Riku, Leivein and Piguro, but everyone that was at the party turned their gazes to the owner of that voice. The one standing there was a girl that had an outer appearance of about the same age Riku did. Her short brown hair was tied by two scrunchies. Because her uniform was one similar to the one Roppu normally used, it could be assumed that the girl was a messenger.

However, despite how she added a nya at the end of her lines, her fluffly years were ones of a dog. Looking at her tail that went through the gap of her clothes, it wasn’t the tail of a

cat, but of a dog. That demon which it couldn't be decided whether she was a dog or a cat ran straight to where Charlotte was. Having her guards step back, Charlotte walked to the front of the messenger.

"From the first army, I am first lieutenant Mei Asuteroid. There is something urgent that I must have Charlotte-sama know."

"Hmph, what are the matters?"

Holding her fan, Charlotte hid her mouth and quietly looked at the first lieutenant Mei Asuteroid. For the problem to be to the point of her jumping in such a distinguished meeting, one could only wonder what in the world happened. Riku had assumed that Perikka or some other city had fallen, but Mei's expression was cheerful. While Riku was thinking about what it could be, Mei hurriedly spoke.

"We have found the location of the crown of the Demon Lord-nya!"

By the words "crown of the Demon Lord", the place was engulfed in agitation.

Everyone had their eyes sparkling. They started whispering to one another with the people next to them. However, because Riku didn't care about the crown, she didn't receive any impact from it.

"Really, lieutenant commander Riku Barusak, you should read more books."

Shocked, Piguro shook his head. And then, in a way Riku would understand, he explained it to her.

"The crown of the Demon Lord is a crown that has part of the Demon Lord's power stored in it. It is said that by releasing the power inside the crown, it is possible to display a power many times greater of one's usual amount. Although originally the Demon Lord had enough power to have the ground tremble, by using the crown, he would have the power to blow mountains away and split seas... It was something that was thought of not existing anymore."

With words filled with admiration, he explained.

Charlotte as well, as if it was because they had found something the Demon Lord possessed... she was excited. While showing a joyful expression, Charlotte had her face closer to Mei.

“I see! We must immediately go retrieve it... Then, where is it?”

Being inquired by Charlotte, Mei's expression became gloomy. It seems that from then on, she would be reporting bad news. The fluffy dog tail went down.

“Actually... It seems that it had been sealed deep inside a spiritualist temple located at Sherr island-nya.”

“Eh?”

With the words “spiritualist temple”, it was possible to notice the growing mood that had been withered down. The cheerful light in Charlotte's face also had vanished. Right now, with gloomy expressions of their faces, the people at the surroundings started to whisper to each other.

“A spiritualist temple... Isn't it a bit too dangerous?”

“But, if we were to send a large amount of troops, perhaps with the power of numbers... We could

“No, wait... The Sherr island is isolated, you know? Because how it seems the water currents there are fast, isn't it impossible to send a large amount of troops there?”

“Are you kidding? Then, there is no other way but to select a few of the elite to go.”

“But, to face the spiritualists in such low numbers, isn't it a bit reckless...”

Gradually, the situation was turning ominous.

It seems retrieving the Demon Lord crown will be a hard task. While Riku was thinking this was something unrelated to her, she ended up meeting her eyes with Charlotte. A very bad presentiment went through her. She didn't want to display a shameful behavior in

front of Leivein, but she wanted to run away at all costs.

“Oh, ooh! That’s right, there was you!!”

But she wasn’t given the opportunity.

While showing a happy smile, passing through the people at the surroundings, she approached Riku. While imposingly putting one of her hands at her waist, she openly pointed her thin finger to Riku. And then, Charlotte gave her the imperial command.

“Listen, lieutenant commander Riku Barusak. You are to immediately lead an army and go retake the Demon Lord crown!!”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 43**



# THE SNEERING AND THE CRIES OF THE GULLS

Since Charlotte had given Riku the imperial command, it has been one week.

Along with two thousand soldiers, she arrived at Fert city.

From that city located in front of the sea, Riku and her subordinates would be boarding ships and heading to Shirr island. The breeze of the sea loudly filled the whole city. Smelling the smell of salt in the air, Riku associated the city with Perikka city, which was also a port city. However, there were points in which it was very different from Perikka city. That was, the scale of the harbors, and also, the gorgeousness of the city. But there was something more notable than either of those.

“As expected of the front lines. ...It has feeling of tension different from Perikka.”

The city of Fert was filled with a feeling of tension that would sting the skin.

All the demons walking at the streets would have a weapon at hands and would be walking rigidly. Rather than merchants, the number of soldiers was much greater. Among the establishments lined up one next to another at the main street, the ones to stand out weren't restaurants or stores that sold sea products, but instead, the stores selling rough weapons and establishments with women to heal men from the fatigue of war.

“We have no time to be playing around. Do it after we come back.”

Riku rebuked Vrusto, who had lecherous face. In his sight, there was a girl inviting him with her hand while showing a lustful smile. Being pointed out by Riku, Vrusto clicked his tongue in displeasure.

“Stupid, I already know we are going to be departing soon.”

“If you know that, then keep your feelings in check.”

Riku snorted.

And then, while keeping her eyes forward, she kept walking. She was more or less putting strength on her steps. Riku was trying to keep herself calm. However, even without talking to anyone, her irritation was welling up. Her feelings she couldn't complain of about her unwillingly being dispatched to the Shirr island were growing violent.

“...Ojou-chan, you should calm down a bit, you know?”

“Calm down? I am calm. Calm enough.”

Responding to that question mixed with a sigh, Riku answered as if she was repressing something. Being showered by an anger that felt she could draw her halberd at any moment, Vrusto slightly stepped back. Without knowing about how Vrusto was feeling right now, Riku showered her complaints at him.

“Really, what is that girl thinking? Without sufficient investigations... It might even be a trap.”

“Yes, ojou-chan. You really need to calm down.”

“Like I said before, I am calm enough...?”

Riku was speaking while being carried by her anger. However, she noticed a group of people, which suddenly appeared in front of her eyes, interrupting her. In a line, the men that were wearing the uniform of the Demon Lord army stood at her way. Stopping her feet, the demon that was at the center approached Riku. It was a middle-aged demon that had sharp horns and had strong muscles that were possible to notice even through his clothes. He was giving off a aura that felt as if he wanted to squish her. Riku gave a glance to the demon.

“...Do you have any business with me?”

“...Aren't you that jumped-up one everyone had been talking about?”

Filled with scorn, the strong demon answered her back with a question. Riku narrowed her eyes at his way of speaking that felt as if he was looking at people from above. She was often times scorned by demons, but now a demon that felt even more irritating than those appeared.

Being given those words of scorn didn't matter anymore. Rather, Riku wanted her to rise in position even faster. Compared to a demon, she was a human, which had a short life span. Before she knew of Shibira's predictions, she believed she would only be able to fight in her finest conditions only until her thirties. Her remaining time was of only about twenty years. It was impossible for her to spend many years raising her rank like it was for the demons. For her to be able to fight together with Leivein sooner and for a longer time, even if by a little bit, she needed and be promoted as fast as possible.

Yes, that was fine. Riku wasn't concerned about that.

But she didn't like the demon in front of her eyes. She didn't like his eyes that held disdain for her being a human. This didn't change ever since the time she lived at the Barusak up to this moment... She didn't like gazes that looked down on her.

“I have nothing to say about me being jumped-up. I am lieutenant commander Riku Barusak. By Charlotte-sama's imperial command, from this port, I will be departing to Sherr island.”

Swallowing up her irritation, she pretended to be calm.

In case it was Vrusto or Asty, she would openly vent her anger. However, she didn't know the name, nor the rank of the demon that was in front of her eyes. If she was to flare up at a demon she was uncertain of the identity, it was possible she might end up having Leivein's name covered in dirt. Only Leivein had accepted her since the beginning without having any disdain. That's why she couldn't betray his expectations. The reason she had to endure right now was also for Leivein's sake. While telling that to herself, Riku endured the look of disdain.

“I see, you were that human.”

The demon silently crossed his arms. And then, giving her a glance that was as if he was

looking at some disgusting thing, he snorted.

“Don’t start getting conceited just because you’ve done well in one or two wars.”

Saying only that, along with the demons that had been blocking her way, he left. Passing by her, he didn’t forget to mock her, saying “You lowly pet dog of the black dragon”.

For a moment, she didn’t understand who he was talking about when he had said “black dragon”. But the moment the image of Leivein’s two gallant black wings surfaced at her mind, blood went up to her head. Riku’s hand moved to the sword that was at her waist. But she didn’t draw the silver sword. Stopping Riku, Vrusto was grasping her hand. She tried to forcefully shake him off and draw the sword, but Vrusto put his body weight to restrain Riku at all costs. While still holding her to prevent her from drawing her sword, he bent his body to reach next to Riku’s ears.

“Ojou-chan, endure. That guy is the lieutenant general Zerrik, who governs this city.”

“...Lieutenant general?”

“That’s right. That’s why you need to endure.”

Lieutenant general was Leivein’s same rank. Riku mustn’t cut a demon that was so much more higher ranked than her no matter what. She didn’t care if she was to receive punishment herself. However, Leivein’s reputation will definitely be affected. Riku clenched her teeth.

Until Zerrik disappeared from Riku’s sight, Vrusto kept holding her hand. And then, once he went away, he released her hand. By that time, Riku’s anger had more or less calmed down. While shaking her hand because of the strength used on it, she spoke in an indifferent tone.

“...There is no way I would have seriously cut him down.”

“They were serious, you know? Your eyes.”

“By no means.”

Saying only that, once again, Riku started walking.

Completely forgetting about Zerrik, she started to think about her next battle. However, she didn't really get any new ideas. It seems her head was still boiling hot in the end. He showed contempt to not only her, but also to her beloved Leivein. Some day, she was definitely going to have Zerrik suffer for it. Rather, the way she was feeling right now was to the point that it would have been fine if she was to go directly punish him right now.

...But there wouldn't be any meaning to doing that, and it would only cover Leivein's honor in dirt.

Shaking her head, Riku shook off those idle thoughts. And right at that moment, coming from behind, the figure of a boy with rabbit ears entered at her sight. Suddenly, she remembered about something she had forgot to ask him.

"By the way... Sergeant major Roppu, were you able to prepare our ship?"

"Ha, yes. I've already finished with it."

Roppu hurriedly gave her document papers. Spreading the document without caring, she briefly looked over it. The information about the cladding and the armaments of the four ships that had been prepared were written in an organized manner. Checking things like the positions of the cannons, the capacity of the ships and the highest speed a, a sense of satisfaction. Riku slowly moved her mouth.

"Five hundred people should fit on each ship... They are merchant ships, right?"

"Ye-yes. We have purchased the merchant ships from Perikka city. They had already been delivered to the port of Fert."

"I see. Thank you. You've done well."

"You've done well... Ojou-chan!! What are you thinking? For us to be attacking them with merchant ships and not warships!"

Vrusto was at lost for words. As if wanting Riku to reconsider, he grasped her shoulders.

“Listen! The temple located at Sherr island is a place where spiritualists train at. There is no way a place like this is easy to attack, and they are definitely prepared for water combat. There is no way we can win with a merchant ship that doesn’t have any heavy weaponry!”

“Yes, I agree with you.”

Riku had a completely calm face against Vrusto’s opposition.

Her irritation from a few moments ago had considerably lessened. While feeling she was coming back to her usual self bit by bit, Riku said.

“I believe they probably had been training themselves for naval battles enough for them to be able to deal with attacks from demon warships.”

“That’s why we need the best warship we can find!”

“But the current of the water is fast; we can’t send in ships like that.”

And besides, not only Riku, but her subordinates didn’t have experience in naval battles. If one was to look for people that had it at the Demon Lord army, they could be found, but the majority were still only used to the land. Unfortunately, Riku hadn’t found demons experienced with naval battles.

Against a enemy who had intensively trained for naval battles, if them, who were amateurs at naval battles, were to face them, it would be impossible to win. It would be too late for her to start learning about strategies for naval battles now, and if she was to use numbers to attack, the majority of the soldiers would die. To begin with, risking your life for a dream-like object that isn’t even known whether it really exists is stupid. But even so, she needed to achieve victory. It was such a stupid situation. Snorting, Riku spoke.

“We should just turn over the board game they are used to and create a situation of our own advantage.”

Riku wanted to end this stupid mission once for all.

The gulls flying at the sky were hysterically raising screams nonchalantly. While listening to those stupid cries, Riku set her resolve.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 44**



# THE OTHER FACE OF SHERR ISLAND

The Sherr island was a solitary island at the distant seas.

Throughout all the four seasons, the climate is always chilly, and in the winter, the sea water even freezes.

The spiritualists training in this severe ambient must abstain of all the desires. They must abstain from alcoholic drinks, tobacco, sweets and their sexual desires. The spiritualists that chose this place to train would be practicing their techniques for their lifetime. In this isolated island cut off from the world, in these long years and months, the spiritualists would grow to become spiritualists that would make their name at the Shiidoru kingdom.

...However, that was nothing more than the [outward appearance] of this island.

The head of the temple, Theodour Bistolru, gave a long sigh. In his island that lacked desires or anything else, enjoyment didn't exist. The beautiful words of giving oneself everything for training are spoken of. However, the Sherr island didn't have anything noble in it. In the end... It was only a [penal colony].

The spiritualists were a noble existence.

Without dirtying their hands with injustice and political corruption, they would support the extermination of the demons and maintain the safety of the Shiidoru kingdom. They were without doubt admired by the population of the Shiidoru kingdom. If the populace was to know a spiritualist dirtied his hand by committing a crime, their majesty and authority would decline. In order to avoid that, the "honorable spiritualists" that committed a crime would be in name said they decided by themselves to go train and be sent to that isolated island disconnected from the world. Once they were sent there, it was impossible to put their feet onto the royal capital once again. The reality was that it was a [deportation].

Of course there were spiritualists that wanted to escape.

But because of the severe water currents and the height of the waves, they would end up giving up. Sometimes, there would be someone sent to rescue someone of the exiled. However, the ones imprisoned there were existences that could be said of being the shame of the spiritualists. Without them being able to openly go save people, they would go there sneakily as if hiding in the shadows. There were also merchant ships that would smuggle people out if the people were to give them gold. However, in either of the cases, there would be no one in hurry to use them. For something like that, in the instant the person is found, a well trained fleet of ships would go attack them. Even if somebody came to help, they would just become scraps of seaweed together with the one who ran away with them.

“And... You are the newcomer that came three months ago, right?”

Showing a tired face, Theodour looked at the girl in front of his eyes. The girl that was still at her young ages was carrying a instrument case as if it was something very important to her.

“Yes. My name is Popii Buryuuser.”

The girl that named herself Popii was a girl pure in all aspects.

Overall, from her appearance, she looked unreliable, but it could be seen she had strong determination in her eyes. Theorour let out words of admiration.

“A Buryuuser’s ojou-san, yes? I’ve heard your rumors. If I’m not mistaken... You were being too much defiant with the heir of the Barusak.”

Once Theorour said that, Popii’s face twisted. With her eyebrows going down, giving off a lonesome feeling, looking frustrated, she moved her lips.

“...I only wanted Rook-sama to wake up.”

“But for you, who is nothing more than a nobody from the Buryuuser, to oppose someone like the heir of another house, is a grave problem. That’s why you were sent here.”

“...Yes. But I don’t regret that I came to Sherr island. If there was be something I would be regretting of... It would be that I couldn’t change Rook-sama’s mind. Only that.”

Popii frankly spoke.

Theodour already knew the reason why Popii was exiled. Apparently, he had been continuously saying to Rook Barusak things like “It would be nice to have someone more cooperative” or “Look at your surroundings before starting to think”. This gradually made him stressed, and so, three months ago, she received a complaint from the Barusak household side, thus having Popii’s exile decided.

“A girl that would do her all for a man... But it seems you’ve overdone it.”

“...I don’t... Regret.”

The mood of the surroundings became darker.

Theodour wasn’t feeling like talking to this girl with her own distorted love problems anymore. A person being sent to Sherr island was rare, and so, more than anyone, he felt interest in newcomers putting their effort on training. But now it didn’t matter anymore. Despite how she wasn’t reflecting on what she did, her outward appearance was of someone that was ready to be rehabilitated. If that was the case, it wasn’t particularly a problem.

“I see. Then, immediately start your training and start repenting your actions... Until your beautiful skin becomes all wrinkled.”

It happened at the instant Theodour sent her off with his hand.

The sound of the door being reservedly knocked at echoed through the quiet room. With Theodour only saying “enter”, his subordinate that entered the room was standing there with a face that looked as if he was worried about something.

“Theodour Bernaal-sama, there is something I must report. Actually... There are four merchant ships coming at our direction... What should we do?”

“Merchant ships?”

Hearing the report, Theodour asked back in a weird manner.

So that they can buy things like food supplies and miscellaneous goods used in the daily life for the part the island is not self-sufficient, and also so that the people “standing on watch”, such as the temple head, can buy what they want, only once each month, a merchant ship passes by. Therefore, having a merchant ship coming isn’t really something unnatural. However, since the last had come, it hadn’t been more than two weeks. For the next merchant ship to arrive, it was a bit too fast.

“That’s suspicious... Perhaps it is one that came to rescue the exiled. Don’t let it enter the port.”

“Y-yes. I thought that as well, but... From what I learned from them, it seems they are merchant ships that were running away from demons.”

“...They were running away from demons?”

The gap between Theodour’s eyebrows wrinkled.

The places the demon held; the Fert port the demons had control over since a long time and the recently captured Perikka port, were both faraway places. If they had their ships nearby, there is a chance they were coming to attack. However, even so, there is a point in the story he couldn’t accept. Theodour put both of his elbows onto the table.

“But if they were attacked, how could they still have four ships remaining?”

“I thought that too. But the ships didn’t seem to be very new, and also, they looked damaged. But we are not aware to the point of knowing if the damage was really caused by that demon attack. ...Should we attack the fleet?”

“No, don’t sink them yet. ...If this story was to be true, we would be abandoning the merchant ships. Right at the moment the top brass becomes aware the noble spiritualists of the Sherr island didn’t help the merchant ships from a demon attack... This isn’t a problem worth to risk having our heads being sent flying.”

But even with that, they shouldn’t easily let them dock at their ports. After pondering over that, Theodour gave his order.

“Hmth... If they are really merchants, they should be carrying a bill of lading with them.

Go verify that.”([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill\\_of\\_lading](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_of_lading) )

If they have the commercial bills, he will receive them. But if they don't have it, then he won't let them dock. And if they come close despite that, he can consider those actions as hostile, and then, all he needs to do it to use his prided fleet to attack them.

“Understood.”

Saying only that, the subordinate hurriedly left the room.

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At the cost of Sherr island, there were four merchant ships anchored.

Next to one of those ships, there was a little boat that came in order to verify whether they had the commercial bills. With the envoys that were on the little boat being raised to the deck of the ship, they saw the tens of people that were waiting for them. Many people had their heads, arms, legs, and so, covered with cloth. Perhaps they were hurt in the battle with the demons. While thinking about that, the envoys noticed one girl... The single person that didn't get injured. It was a girl that had red hair that gave off the feelings they were burning. Only the girl didn't have any bandage that were visible to their eyes.

“That's an ill omen... For a red haired person to be of the ship. And even more, it's a girl.”

One of the envoys whispered next to the ear of his colleague. That colleague gave a small nod.

“Ah-ah. That's why they got attacked by demons... Well, enough with the chit-chat. Hey, where is the captain of the ship? We've come to see if you possess the bill of lading for your merchandise.”

“If you are asking for the captain, she is standing right there-de gozaru.”

The girl that had cloth wrapped around her head pointed to the red haired girl. The emissaries thought she had made some kind of mistake. They didn't believe those people had the nerves to have that ill-omened red head be the captain, the one that would lead where the fleet would sail to, and that much more with her being that weak-looking. While they were troubled on how they should respond to that, the red haired girl that had been declared [captain] approached them as if she was dancing.

"Good afternoon. Are you the envoys that came from the Sherr island?"

"Ah, yes. We've come to confirm the bill of lading. By the way... Are you really the captain?"

Being asked by the envoys that were half in doubt, the red haired girl nodded as if it was obvious. Putting her right hand at her waist, she snorted.

"The one leading this ships is me. Now...If we show you the bill, will you really let us in?"

"Of course. We will lead you there. That's why, we want you to show us the bill."

"Alright. Wait a second."

The moment the red haired girl had muttered those words, his colleague that was standing next to him had his head flying. His colleague, that was now only a head, flew in a red arc while having a stupid expression on his face. And then, falling down, it rolled at the deck of the ship.

"Eh?"

He could only look at the head of his colleague that had fallen to the floor in surprise. Before he could even try to understand what happened, he felt a hot pain at his chest. With that intense pain waking him up, the envoy could only raise groans. Opening his eyes wide-open, he somehow turned his gaze to his chest. Doing that, he noticed there was a sharp blade piercing his heart. Drop by drop, blood flowed down from the silver colored sword.

"Sergeant major Roppu, take off the clothes of that guy there. Corporal Frants, you take

off the clothes of this one and change into them. Hey, I can see your ears. Be careful.”

Together with those words, she drew the sword from his chest. Because he couldn't hold on anymore, he crumbled down at the floor of the deck. Roughly breathing, he was somehow still conscious.

“Lieutenant commander, we need to wear those clothes? ...They are covered in blood.”

“They won't know if they don't look it from close-on.”

These voices were becoming distant. Second by second, something hot flowed out of his chest. Whether it was his imagination, the pain also started to fade away.

While even then somehow keeping conscious, the envoy desperately raised his face. The first thing that he saw was the blue sky. At that seemingly transparent scenery, the red girl shook off the blood of her sword. With her red hair fluttering with the breeze of the sea, the blue sky's light was reflecting at her. Because of that backlighting, he couldn't see her face. However...

“It's for taking down that temple. Now, quickly change on the clothes.”

With his conscious fading away, he had the impression the girl was showing a smile.

It was an innocent smile unsuited to her age that felt like fragments of maliciousness were being gathered there.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 45**



# **.SHOULD WE FIGHT BACK? SHOULD WE SURRENDER?**

From his office, Theodour was checking the situation outside with his eye glass.

In case the little boat the envoys were at didn't come back, he would have needed to immediately mobilize the fleet. But it seems there was nothing to be worried about. The little boat was safely returning to Sherr island together with the four merchant ships. Looking at it with his eye glass, he could confirm that on the little boat that was guiding the merchant ships, the two of his soldiers were embarking it. He couldn't see their faces well, but they were wearing the uniform of the Sherr island. In other words, the four merchant ships weren't hostile. Theodour let out a sigh of relief.

"...So in the end, it was the truth."

While feeling embarrassed for being too suspicious, he started to think about what he should do after they landed. There was no way he could send them away right after letting them stay. He had many things to talk with them, such as how much is the time they are planning on staying, how much food they need and if they have anything else they need them to help with.

"Really, now to go talk with them ... Haa..."

Theodour decided that for now, he should start by changing his clothes.

While having his back facing the window, he headed to the changing room. Since he was going to talk with them, he needed to wear clothes fitting the head of the temple, especially since the ones he will be talking to are merchants, who would be carrying merchandise on their ships. It was because they were merchants that ran away from the demons that he couldn't let them look down on him. No matter how well he handled the conversation, if there was any single disorder with his clothes, it was possible the merchant would look down on him. There was a possibility he would have a long lasting relationship hereafter. Since in this situation, they were merchants that ran away after being attacked by demons, there were chances of him succeeding in doing that. Looking at

the bigger picture, there was no way he could let himself be depreciated in their first impressions of him.

However... If he was to keep watching the ships for a bit longer, perhaps, the following events could have been different.

But to keep being troubled over the possibilities is of no use after all. By the time Theodour noticed all the commotion, it all had already been too late. Right at the moment he was looking at the mirror adjusting the collar of his uniform and putting his hair in order, a subordinate of his rushed inside the room with a force that was as if he had tore the door down. Theodour let out a tired sigh.

“What’s the matter? My hair got messed. Even though I will have a meeting soon....”

“It’s not the time to be saying that! We have been tricked. The merchant ship had demons on it!!”

Theodour stopped the hand that was tying his necktie.

At first, he couldn’t understand the report given by his subordinate. Until the last part of the report, word by word, could finally permeate into his mind, a bit of time had passed. But once he could understand the meaning of those words, he snorted, denying the possibility.

“What a stupid thing... Didn’t they have the bill?”

“N-no. Actually, they killed the envoys that went there and exchanged places with them.”

“...It can’t be possible.”

Theodour hurried to his office.

Looking through the window, he saw the port he had already become familiar to dyed in blood. Unfortunately, most of the ones dead at the port were the temple soldiers. Many demons were approaching the temple while swinging their swords or spears. Theodour weakly crumbled down to the floor.

“Ho-ho-how... This is impossible.”

Before he could send his prided fleet, the demons had already landed at the island.

The soldiers that were completely unprepared for battle looked as if they were being trampled down by the demons. That was specially for the red haired demon leading them; it was cutting down the spiritualists more cheerfully than any of them. Even by looking from the distance, it was possible to see it cutting about ten people with only one swing of its halberd. Looking at the red haired demon that was acting insane, a chill passed through him and he started to tremble. He could not win against that red haired demon. He knew this not by logic, but by instinct.

“Thi-this... Perhaps it might be better if we surrender.”

Before he could notice, those kind of words were already leaving his mouth.

More than the importance of such a thing as the honor of the spiritualists, his own life was far-off much more important. And so, it was better if he surrendered now so that he could prolong his life even if it is by only one hour, and then wait for a chance to run away. However, the one thinking that was only Theodour.

“What are you saying!? Shouldn’t we properly go fight them?”

It seems Theodour’s subordinate intended to resist to the bitter end.

His subordinate was showing surprised expression for the opposition of Theodour, who had already given up.

“Even without fighting, it is obvious. Look at that. That red haired is killing ten men with a single swing. If it was a naval battle, it would be another story, but there is no way we can win against that monster on land!”

“Aren’t there a great number of spiritualists in this temple? Now is the time to use them!”

“Foolishness. Are you saying we should make the prisoners go fight?”

Theodour started to tremble violently with his subordinate's declaration. Indeed, there is hope for winning if they used the spiritualists imprisoned here. One way or another, they were spiritualists that had been accumulating training in a daily basis. Naturally, rather than actual practicing, most of the spiritualists were developing their knowledge about demon banning techniques. However, there were also spiritualists that were very experienced in combating demons. If they were to use those well, perhaps they could win.

But even so, Theodour couldn't decide himself.

"Bu, but... Is it really fine to use the prisoners?"

"If you don't use it now, when will you be using?"

"U, umumu."( う 、 う む む ) (TL note: I guess he is saying yes? .-.)

There was no more time left. The savage demons were coming towards the temple at the moment. Twisting his face, he tiredly gave his order.

"...Then, you go select the people you want from the prisoners. And also, you should take the role of leading them in the fight."

"Ha!!"

With his subordinate giving a short response, he left the room like the wind.

In the office, only Theodour remained. By himself, he was thinking. He had absolute trust in his subordinate, but he didn't think it would really go that well easily. There were many people with great demon banning powers among the prisoners, but they were out of practice for a long time. Using them to clash with the elite-picked demons that were now fighting down there, he couldn't imagine it was possible for them to smoothly be able to win the battle.

"Mumumu... What am I supposed to do...."( む む む )

He wanted to believe his subordinate would win, but he also needed to consider him

losing.

If they were to be defeated, even if he was to implore the demons, their impression of him would only worsen. If it was to become like that, the neck of their enemy's general, which was himself, would be in danger. By any means, he needed to think of a way for him to save his own life.

“...Should I give them the treasure that had been handed down for generations at this temple... No, no, I can't imagine them as people that would pull back just by giving something like a treasure. Maybe serving them with food, having them become drunk? ... No, the demons would be vigilant about the food. It would be a problem if this would make them think there is poison in the food. Umumu... Then, as expected, should we entertain them with music or dances? Hm? Music?”

At this moment, in Theodour's mind, a great idea shone. Unconsciously, he smirked.

“That's right, there was. Alright, let's go with that.”

Theodour was cheerfully smiling. They would definitely be vigilant with food in middle of the battlefield. There was also the possibility of them being cautious of the movements during the dances. But if it was a musical performance, they wouldn't be vigilant, thinking he was plotting something. Rather than relying on that uncertain battle, he was now confined into accomplishing a plan the enemy would never think of.

Theodour arranged the preparations to have a certain person called.

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How many people had she killed?

While rotating her halberd, she suddenly thought about that.

Since Riku had successfully landed at Sherr island, she had been swinging her halberd all the time. However, all the people coming to stop her were all so weak to the point of being depressing. Compared to the spiritualists of the fights at Myuuz and Karkata, they were so

weak Riku was getting bored of them. While running in the direction of the temple, bored, Riku used her halberd to mow down the spiritualists. In less than a second, she had opened the bellies of about ten spiritualists, making their healthy looking organs fly out to the floor. But she didn't particularly pay mind to that. While avoiding the filth that came out from them, she went forward.

“Ojou-chan, don't go act like all this is boring!”

Rebuking Riku, who was acting like that, Vrusto shouted from behind. However, the enthusiasm in his face was also not much. It seems that he was also bored with how only small fries were coming. He looked as if he was swinging his sword without any emotions in particular. Riku snorted.

“Although second lieutenant Vrusto is also bored?”

“That's because I've been forced to be at the interior of that ship all the time because of my face. And then, when I finally thought I could go fight, there were only weaklings.

No matter how one would look at it or from what angle, Vrusto's face was the hairy face of a wolf. Even if he covered his face with bandages or a hat so that he wouldn't stand out, it was absolutely impossible to see him as a human. No matter the great efforts, it was impossible. And so, it was better for him to stay hidden in one of the rooms of the ship until they landed at the island. And so, since they had departed from Fert, he had been shut inside a room.

“But, just because I said that, it doesn't mean it is fine to put up this bored face. If you let your guard down, you will get in trouble, alright? ...See. Just as I was speaking, reinforcements from mister enemy came. Ojou-chan, look ahead.”

Without needing Vrusto to say anything about it, the front was starting to get noisy. From the direction of the temple, many spiritualists advanced towards them while raising their voices. It was as if a huge wave was approaching. Their numbers weren't that great, but because each of them were overflowing with desire, they could be seen in a significant way. With their eyes shining in blaze, it couldn't be thought that they would be pulling back at all. The charging spiritualists were giving off a strong feeling that they would battle to the end until they won.

“Oh, finally people that seem to have spirit appeared.”

Riku licked her lips.

It was as if... As if she was now about to go gauge their quality.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 46**



# こうして旗が翻る

Popii Buryuser had a sliver of hope over this battle that had just started.

If the prisoners were to get achievements, perhaps their crimes might be absorbed. Even if the crimes weren't absorbed, maybe the sentence might get shortened. While holding her weapon, she was praying for luck at war.

“Popii Buryuuser, you've been ordered to go to the office.”

That's why at the time when she was called to the office... She violently fell down.

There was no way her beloved and unreliable Rook would go visit her in his own accord. If that was the case, she would have gone. Even though she had had in her hands a once in a lifetime chance, now it was crumbling, slipping through the gaps of her fingers. If her position was a bit higher, maybe she could go against those orders. However, the one calling her was the head of the temple. Someone of a branch family like her is not someone that would be able to oppose him.

“...Yes.”

Popii unwillingly followed the orders.

While carrying her weapon, in heavy steps, she went to where Theodour was. Arriving at the office, she saw Theodour looking outside the window. He wasn't wearing an armor and didn't have a sword with him. He definitely couldn't be thought as the head of the temple that should have been now be handling with the battle happening right now. While Popii was doubting her own eyes, Theodour slightly bent his head towards Popii.

“You've come.”

“Yes. ...Then, would you have any business with me?”

“Umu, it’s a very simple thing. You know, it has something to do with the reconciliation with the demons after we surrender, but...”

“Wha-!?”

Popii was lost for words.

The man in front of her eyes, of anything he could do, he had already given up on the battle from the start. He had already assumed they would be losing and was clumsily raising the white flag to the demons; their enemies. He was completely sullyng the pride of the spiritualists. Popii’s body trembled in anger. When she was about to move her hand to her weapon, Theodour raised his hand as if to tell her not reckless.

“Well, well, try to think. The difference in numbers is too great. Even if we were to add the prisoners, they would be only a few tens of people. With only these many spiritualists, there is no way we can defeat them. Besides, from what I saw from the window.... There is also a red haired demon that is worth for a thousand soldiers there. ”

“That’s why... You will surrender? Are we, the spiritualists, going to sell our pride to the demons!?”

Seeing Popii putting intonation on her last words, Theodour smiled.

“That’s why I made a plan.”

“Plan?”

Being asked that by Popii, Theodour nodded with a “umu”. Turning away from the window, he walked over to Popii. The sounds of the battle that was spreading outside were being heard from somewhere at the distance.

“Rather than surrendering, we will negotiate for peace. You know, they definitely came here for a reason. In that case, if we were to let them have what they were looking for... We will inevitably be able to settle this peacefully.”

“Well, that would be so... Then, are you planning to send them poisoned food while we negotiate with them? ...No, it wouldn't work.”

While saying that to herself, she decided that this wasn't the case.

The demons weren't stupid. She couldn't imagine they would be so stupid as to eat the food given to them at the enemy territory without any hesitations. If they were stupid like that, the spiritualists would have already annihilated them much long ago. In order to poison a living being that is capable of thought, even if limited, it was certainly necessary to have some schemes.

“Umu. Actually, Potii Buryuuser, in this banquet... I want you to play your instrument to comfort them. A certain comfort that will give us the advantage, you see.”

“...I see. You were talking about that.”

Potii was able to understand. She had finally understood the reason she had been called and was able to accept it. Popii was slowly caressing her weapon... The case of the musical instrument.

“If I'm not mistaken, your attribute was slumber... If you were to play your instrument while infusing your attribute, no matter which demon, they would all fall asleep.”

“But... This is an attribute infusing. It would put humans to sleep too.”

“I don't care. As long as you don't fall asleep yourself, there are no problems. Isn't it fine to just make their heads fall once they are sleeping?”

Theodour and the other spiritualists that would be participating at the banquet would fall asleep together with the demons. However, the one playing the instrument, Popii herself, wouldn't fall asleep. After all of them would be deeply sleeping, all it was necessary to do was to calmly cut the heads of the demons one by one. In killing their commander then, the demons would have lost their leadership in only these few moments. And then, after that it was easy. All they needed to do was sink the demons that would have had retreated to their ships with their fleet.

“In short, this music. You will make the savage demons fall asleep and cut their heads off, thus decreasing their fighting force.”

“And if we defeat their strongest soldiers, our side would also have our morale increased, right? ...I understand.”

“Therefore, you won’t be participating at the banquet as an spiritualist, but as an instrumentalist. Go change your clothes.”

“Yes.”

Usually, she wouldn’t want to comply with orders like that. However, only this time it was different.

She would be able to get the heads of those ambitious demons that came to attack this island with her own hands. Having her sentence shortened wasn’t a dream anymore. Perhaps she would receive a permission to stay outside of the island for some days.

“Wait for me, Rook.”

Her beloved one.

He was her important person, who had treated her with equality despite her being nothing more than someone from a branch family. But differently from his appearance, he was a insecure person that felt he would break at any time . She wanted to help him with that; she wanted to help him walk to a good direction even if it was for only a bit. Although it had been only little by little, she was able to see it really happening

In high-spirits, Popii headed to the changing room.

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Meanwhile, the battle unfolding in front of the temple was proceeding harshly.

Swinging down their enchanted swords and spears, flames flew and strong winds danced around. However, none of the demons were fearing that. With her petite figure, Riku was at the front breaking through the soldiers, and behind her, Vrusto, Asty and other demons that were specialized in heavy assaults followed after her. Riku didn't care about the flames that looked they would roast her cheeks, nor the blood that was being scattered around.

“Each and every single one of them... Is this really all they have?”

By simply rotating her halberd at hands, she chopped up the spiritualists as if she was dancing. Eventually, as if the thought that she was too dangerous sprouted on their minds, here and there, spiritualists that were stepping back started to appear.

“Shit... This damnable red hair!”

However, it didn't mean that all of them became like that.

A spiritualist whose dream was leaving that temple charged at her while holding a sword that was of about the same size of Riku's stature. His speed was the same of someone that wasn't using any equipment; no, it was faster. With the depths of his lungs, the spiritualist, who closed in to her in only an instant, shouted.

“This is the end!”

Aiming for Riku, he swung his massive sword. However, that strike ended in a miss. At the place where Riku should have been until a few moments ago, there wasn't anyone. With a half step, she hopped to the side and went around to the back of the spiritualist.

“Eh?”

“Too late.”

With a faint smile, she swung down her halberd without hesitations. The halberd, who divided the air it cut through, split the spiritualist into two halves while doing a sharp sound. Easily like that, he was put to his end. The spiritualists who had seen that, as to be expected, had their own thoughts about that. The spiritualist at her surroundings had stopped their movement for an instant. Riku wouldn't let this slip by.

“Look. You’ve stopped moving.”

“Guaah!”

Without hesitations, she mowed down the spiritualists who had been petrified in shock with her halberd. In one go, six heads of the spiritualists fell down to the ground. Looking at that, the other spiritualists had certainly come back to their senses. Riku threw a glance to the spiritualists.

“Now, who is next?”

“Hii, don’t falter!!”(ひっ)

From the direction that spiritualist who was tightly holding his spear had shouted, another voice was heard.

“No, stop, stop!!”

From the direction of the temple, the sound of those shouts were coming closer.

A human bearing a white flag came running. Curiously, the white flag was fluttering high on an extravagant spear. The spiritualists who were ready to fight had their mouths wide-open.

“I am the head of the temple, Theodour Bernaal. I declare that the spiritualist temple of Sherr island is surrendering.”

“Surrendering?”

The human that named himself to be the head of the temple excitedly came closer to Riku. His eyes were hiding fear. In the end, it seems he was surrendering because he wanted to keep living. While seeing how the white flag was fluttering, in her heart, Riku was utterly disgusted. Such a shameful human. It was completely impossible to feel any feelings of wanting to struggle from him.

“...Why are you surrendering?”

While readying her halberd, Riku tried to ask him. After she did that, despite how his voice was trembling, he properly looked at Riku and answered.

“Until today, demons had never attacked this place. For demons to come attack this place now, it can only mean that they came here needing something from this island. I thought that if I was to hand it over, there would be no need to have my comrades needlessly killed.”

“...I see.”

Riku muttered in a bored manner.

Apparently, if she was to let the spiritualists live, they would give up on the Demon Lord crown. The objective they came here for was to obtain it. However, by her feelings, Riku wouldn't settle down if she wasn't to exterminate all the spiritualists. After pondering about that for a bit, Riku turned behind her. Standing there was Vrusto, holding his sword.

“What do you think, second lieutenant Vrusto?”

Riku wanted to know the general opinion of the demons by asking Vrusto.

Was she supposed to annihilate the spiritualists despite them raising the white flag, or should she accept their proposal? Being asked by Riku, Vrusto opened his mouth as if it was a pain in the ass to talk.

“Well... What to say, if we get that crown, we will have completed our task. Besides, I don't really feel good in killing the enemy after they raised the white flag.”

“Yes... But, all they are doing is begging for their life.”

“Maybe it is so. But you know, rather than killing a bunch of cowards that had surrendered, isn't it better for us to get some free time?”

With Vrusto saying that, Riku started pondering about it for a bit.

The image of that spiritualists that begged for his life at Derufoi a few days ago surfaced her mind. It was a bad spiritualist that, at the point of his death, was lamenting about how he had a child and how he had a family. It was a shameful spiritualists that would surrender as soon as he noticed he was going to lose. At that time, the spiritualist that had run away was only a single one. That's why she had killed him without thinking too much. Of course, she could easily kill the spiritualists standing in front of her eyes now. However, killing the tens of spiritualists, or hundreds of spiritualists one by one would take a long time, and during all that, they would be attacking back. And so, her precious soldiers might die.

...It was something she needed to avoid.

Riku reluctantly nodded.

"I understand. If you abide to our conditions, we can avoid killing all of you."

Theodour's face was shining. Riku indifferently disclosed of their objective.

"Hand over the Demon Lord crown that is being guarded by you."

"De-demon Lord crown... You say?"

The shine of Theodour's face vanished and it started to show a troubled expression. Right at that instant, the halberd was next to his neck. The point of the axe shallowly cut the skin of his throat. Suddenly, blood was flowing out.

"Do you have it? Do you not?"

"I-i don't know anything about this object you call Demon Lord crown, but there are many treasures that had been handed down through the generations here in this spiritualist temple. Until we find it, it might take time..."

"In this case, immediately go find it."

"Ye-yes!! Hey, you... Immediately go find it and bring it over!!"



In a high-pitched scream, Theodour ordered the spiritualists. As if their butts were on fire, they rushed to the temple. Confirming they were now bringing the crown, Riku took the halberd away from his neck.

“Errr... Since it will take time until we are able to find it, what should we do? Since outside is cold, how about we go in, and maybe drink some tea inside?”

Theodour was hesitantly asking Riku’s opinion. Right now, because she had been moving her body, she was warm. However, if she was to wait here doing much movement... Indeed, with the breeze of the sea and the chilliness of spring, she might get a cold.

Thinking of it as something of good-will, it would be bad to refuse now. But the one doing that was a spiritualist that had surrendered just a few moments ago. If she was to nonchalantly enter at their base and it happened to be a trap, she would become a laughing stock.

“In that case, can we raise a tent here? Then, together with you, we can prepare some tea and wait for the report to arrive.”

In that case, all she needed to do was to take Theodour as a hostage and prepare an encampment here. There was no way she could trust an enemy that could betray her at any time. For an instant, Theodour showed a troubled face, but then, he immediately accepted it.

“Alright. Only, there are many treasures inside the spiritualist temple... And it will take a very long time. While we enjoy the tea, how about we call for some entertainment?”

“...I don’t mind.”

She didn’t have any interest in this kind of things, but if he was plotting something, she could simply cut all of them down.

Inside the tent that was set up, they were eating sweets that had no danger of being poisoned. With his mouth looking very lively, while nibbling the sweets, he kept talking about many things.

“By the way, you are very strong... Did you come from a prestigious demon family?”

“No, I was picked up by someone.”

“I see... Aah, you are so young, but are so excellent. My son is at the royal capital, but he once again got bad grades... Really, such a shameful thing. Should I adopt someone? What should I do...?”

“...”

Despite the glances Vrusto and Roppu gave to Riku, she didn't say anything. At the meantime, Theodour was now changing the conversation to another topic. She would answer when there was no reason not to, and when she didn't feel like answering, she didn't say anything. With that carrying on, after about two hours had passed... Looking at the shadow from the other side of the entrance of the tent, it looked like somebody came.

“Who?”

“Yes, my name Popii. ...By the words of Theodour-sama, I've come to entertain you with my music.”

“You've come. Enter.”

Being called by Theodour, the instrumentalist called Popii showed herself.

All in all, she looked quiet and felt as if there wouldn't be any signs of her attacking someone now. Riku swept a glance at her clothes, but it didn't look like she was hiding any weapons. In the end, she seemed to be a real performer. Putting the stringed instrument that looked like it was supposed to be played with a rod, she quietly lowered her head to Riku and the others. And then, in a delicate voice, she said. (TL note: Violin?)

“Now then... I will start playing my composition.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 47**

# つながる音

Popii swallowed the saliva in her mouth.

The demon that looked to be a cow demon and the wolf faced demon, and also the red haired demon were all glaring at her. The eyes of that demon with a red hair she had the impression she had seen before were sharp in particular. They were eyes that weren't believing in them at all.

At the first moments, she was embarrassed about those geisha clothes that showed too much skin, but this itching feeling of embarrassment was easily settled in front of that feeling of oppression. It was as if she had been made to stand in a bed of needles. Cold sweat was flowing down her back.(TL note: The word used to say she was going to act as an “instrumentalist” is芸子, apparently means geisha. At the time, I was too lazy to google it and have to explain everything because apparently it also could be used for artists in general. Well, because of that, there is a big chance that the “geisha” is being used in the literal sense.)

If she was to fail this mission, there would be no hereafters for her.

As a spiritualist that surrendered to the demons, she would carry shame with her. As a spiritualist of the Buryuuser, only that she needed to avoid at all costs. Popii silently fixed the position of the violin bow. Putting the tip of the gourd shaped instrument at the floor, she gripped the strings while embracing it. She was telling herself to concentrate.(TL note: Violin bow is that stick that is used to rub at the strings. I didn't know it was called like that until I googled it actually.”

“This is my prided geisha. She plays very good tunes.”

Theodour was spitting out words that sounded like self-praise. The red haired demon narrowed her eyes, feeling those words were suspicious. However, this was not the place to be worrying about her gaze. Popii quietly lowered her head.

“Thank you very much.”

As long as she played it with her whole body and spirit, it would be fine.

And then, after all this was finished, it would be the beginning of her new self. Thinking about Rook's face, she put the bow onto the five strings.

“Now... I will begin.

\*Poron(ぽろん) (TL note:What am I supposed to put here...Bloody onomatopoeias. Damnable be this super long and weird word too.)

Using the violin bow to play the instrument, a pleasant sound reverberated. Popii heard someone let a voice of admiration. It wasn't something she was prideful of, but she had knowledge of how to captivate people more than any spiritualist. With only a single sound, she had the hold of the hearts of everyone gathered there. Even if it was for only a moment, as long as she had caught the heart of the person listening to it, the rest was easy. She should now infuse her attribute into the delicate sounds. The sound that invaded the defenseless ears would arrive directly to the brain. And then, whether it was a demon or a human, it would enchant their consciousness and induce them into a deep sleep.

Poron, pororon... (TL note: ...)

Inside the provisional tent, a sad melody that made the heart tremble was being played. The nostalgic memories of somebody special from their home place that was distant would be thought about by hearing it. It was a musical performance that would make tears flow from the eyes. She noticed the mood that was filled with killing intent a few moments ago was now gradually calming down. In place of that, suddenly, she started hearing snores. When the last note faded away from the air, Popii had finally raised her face. And then, the scenery in front of her eyes made her smile in satisfaction.

“I-I did it.”

Theodour was loudly snoring, the cow demon was sleeping with her mouth wide-open and he wolf faces demon was dozing off. Besides that, the red haired demon was hanging her head down without making the slightest movements. The people gathered here all had their eyelids closed. Lying her instrument down on the ground, she calmly came closer to the one that seemed to be the most powerful of them, the red haired demon. She moved her hand to the silver colored sword that was at that demon's waist.

“Now... With that, all I need is to take the head of these guys, and then....”

All this would be over.

Putting her hand at the handle of the sword, she was about to draw it. It was at that instant. Moving like a snake, the arm of the red haired demon wrapped around her neck. Popii tried to release herself from the demon, but the red haired demon wouldn't loose up her strength. Instead, she increased the force more and more, suppressing her.

“Wh...Why?”

Why was the demon that should have been sleeping not? Without being able to properly breath, she was roughly breathing through her mouth. By becoming more in panic, thinking became troublesome. Her consciousness started to become white. In contrast to Popii, who was in confusion, the red haired demon's attitude had always been calm since the beginning.

“I have a very discerning ear. No matter how well you play, I will know it when wicked intentions are in the sound.”

While muttering that, she straggled Popii's neck. Glaring at her with a provoking sidelong glance, the demon glared back with eyes full of hatred. Deep in her dark pupils, a dark flame was burning. Because of the fear she felt by looking at those eyes, Popii unconsciously started to scream. But because her neck was being straggled, all that was leaving from her mouth was a voice that looked like the one of a chicken agonizing to death.

“...With that, it is over. I've heard a good musical performance. Good bye, Popii Buryuuser.”

The instant Popii had heard those last words, blurred memories went through her mind.

When she was young, there was a certain girl that would come to the same auditorium she would. She was a weird girl that all the times would be at the corner of the place wearing a hat. Because she didn't have any attendant waiting next to her, Popii had thought she was from a branch family just like her. Mustering her courage, Popii went and talked to her. She had made a surprised face, but she happily answered back.

The girl was having problems in her spiritualist training, but even so, she said she wanted to become a first-rate spiritualist. Both of them found they sympathized with each other. They would talk about each other's families, would eat sweets together, and would also play together. Once, Popii played a music to her when she asked her to. With the exception to her family, she was the first person to hear her playing. With sparkling eyes, she clapped her hands while saying "Sugoi sugoi".(TL note: I didn't find any english counterpart that would make her properly sound like a kid, except for awesome, which is laaame.)

In a certain day, when she asked why she wore that hat even when inside buildings, the girl anxiously agreed to say the reason if she promised to keep it secret. Of course, the young Popii immediately nodded. The girl showed a troubled smile, but then, while looking a bit happy, at the moment she took out her hat... Popii ran away while screaming. The detested and ominous red hair had appeared before her eyes. Running as fast as she could, she rushed to a group of people she knew.

She left the red haired girl behind.

Yes, the name of the girl that was crying while holding her hat was...

"Riku...chan?"

Right before her throat was completely crushed, that name painfully left her mouth.

However, she was not able to speak the following words. The red haired demon... The red haired girl's arm had completely destroyed Popii's throat. Light vanished from Popii's eyes. While feeling a cold gaze at her, Popii was tormented with a single regret.

Much more than Rook, there was a friend she needed to apologize to before. A pitiable friend she had to look for; to support her at all costs. After that had happened, she definitely regretted what she had done. But then, why had she forgot about those memories...? Right now, until her last moments, she wasn't able to remember. The doubt swirled in her mind. But despite everything, she needed to say it all costs. With all she had, while her consciousness was disappearing, she somehow opened her mouth to say the words she needed to say.

"I'm sorry, Riku-chan"

However, those words didn't leave her mouth. Popii Buryuuser, who had her neck indifferently broken, had silently died.

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After Riku verified Popii Buryuuser wasn't breathing anymore, she took her arm off her neck. The body, which had lost its strength, crumbled down to the floor. Because she had her neck broken, she couldn't speak anymore. But even so, at the last of her moments, Riku had the feeling Popii's lips had moved. Without saying anything, she looked at the dead body for a few moments.

"Goodbye, Popii."

Saying those last words, she didn't look at that corpse anymore.

In the instant she gave a glance to Asty and Vrusto, who had completely fallen asleep, she dropped her fist onto Vrusto's head.

"Ouch!!"

Jumping up, Vrusto put both of his hands onto his head. While rubbing the place he received her fist, he looked at Riku displeased.

"...For you to hit me suddenly, you are heartless."

"It is because you would keep sleeping for a long time if I didn't."

"It can't be helped, you know? I don't have interest in music after all. Besides, ojou-chan is always able to something about it whenever something happens, right?"

With Vrusto muttering that in an easygoing manner, Riku's forehead became wrinkled. Whether he was pushing the irritating things to Riku for her to deal with them or because he relied on her power, although she had the feeling it was the former of those two, she didn't have. Carrying Popii's dead body and Theodour, who was fallen nearby snoring, she turned her eyes to Vrusto.



“Come with me, second lieutenant Vrusto.”

“Stupid, even if you don’t tell me, I know it.”

Riku and Vrusto left the tent.

The pleasant sea breeze caressed their cheeks. The sound of the waves hitting the rock walls were possible to clearly be heard. From a slightly distant place, Theodour subordinates were waiting for the return of their leader, wondering when he was coming. Coming in front of the spiritualists that were lined up, she threw Popii and Theodour at their feet.

“I’ve heard everything of your plans from those two. After having them drunk, it is a walk in the park, you know?”

She actually didn’t hear anything from them, but simply saying that was enough. With the faces of the spiritualists losing its color, all of them kneeled at the same time. The trembling spiritualists was quite a funny view. While playing with her halberd with one hand, Riku was enduring, trying not to laugh.

“Then, did you guys know about that?”

“Y-yes. We knew...”

“Theodour-sama was full with confidence, saying that after he came with the head of the demons, we should attack them all at once... I thought it would go well, but to think it would end like that.”

Apparently, Theodour was planning on having everyone sleep and quietly attack them.

“Doesn’t it mean their surrender was a lie?”

Vrusto let out a surprised voice.

“Well, I guess with that it means we will have to look for the crown ourselves.”

“Yes... Let’s go find it and leave this place already...Sergeant major Roppu, go deal with those guys.”

Riku gave her order to Roppu, who had been on standby outside the tent.

She wanted to leave this island as soon as possible. Hearing the sounds of the sea storm striking the island, she couldn’t help but feel an unpleasant feeling. Lightly doing a signal, ten demons, including Vrusto, entered at the temple along with her.

At Sherr island, the sound of the stormy seas were resonating.

Whether those sounds were a ill omen to or not, that, nobody knew yet.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 48**

# THE BLUE SEA AND THE WHITE LIGHT

Rook Barusak was surprised by how blue the sea there was more than anything.

Looking from the small hill he was on, it was possible to give a glance at the impregnable town, Fert. At the other side of the iron wall no human could get close to, there were many houses that had orange roofs and white mud walls. And further there, it was possible to see the shore of the sea. It was white, covered with snow that accumulated there, and right ahead, it was the deep blue sea.

The Shiidoru kingdom had access to the north sea. However, that dark sea in front of his eyes was strangely very transparent. If one were to compare, the north sea would be like the seas of Shounan and Izu. In contrast to that, the sea in front of his eyes were like those shiny ones of Okinawa or Hawaii that he didn't get the chance to go before his end. With Rook looking at the sea in fascination, Raku, who was standing next to him, cleared her throat.

“Ah, sorry...Raku-ane.”

“Even though you are at battle now, you are too much distracted.”

“...I know.”

The moment he heard the word [battle], his impressions about the sea faded away.

His armor unusually felt heavy. If he was to win this battle, he would be able to restore his honor. It was a battle that didn't exist in the game, but he could do nothing but somehow manage to win it. If he didn't, he would end up dying. Of course, there was the possibility he could press the “continue” button just like in the game, but he knew well enough there wouldn't be something like that. If it existed, he would have used it at the times when Selestinna, Rebecca, Kurumi and Marii had died.

“...But, can we really win?”

Rook was anxious about this battle that didn't exist in the game.

They were doing an strategy he had discussed with Raku about. Although, if he was to say, he would say he had confidence in it, even so, the anxiousness of him losing would constantly traverse through him.

Of course, he intended to put all of his efforts so that he wouldn't lose. After the great defeat of Karkata, Rook had reviewed the training of his friends and subordinates. Of course, he himself also trained. He read the strategy book again, trained his sword and sorted out the memories of his previous life. However, only that wasn't enough. If he didn't investigate why he had lost in his own “special” ways, he would end up losing once again.(TL note:To what am I supposed to translate nakama to...? I guess he is talking about his harem members when he says that, though.)

The result of his pondering was that: [it was because his harem members were weak].

Until now...All battles were ones he would have won no matter what. However, he ended up losing.

The battle of Myuuz, the battle of Derufoi, the battle of Karkata; all of them were battles he was supposed to win. He certainly had organized his troops perfectly and advanced in accord to the game guide. He did absolutely nothing wrong. But if he lost even then, then it was obvious that it was because his allies were weak. Because of his interventions when using the knowledge of his previous world, there were many characters that the timing he should have met them was sooner than it was supposed to be. Selestinna and Rebecca were the most clear examples. Perhaps, he had met them too early, and so, after increasing his intimacy with the girls and solving their trauma, he had stolen their motivation to become stronger.

“Yes...I did nothing wrong.”

He himself did nothing wrong.

Rook muttered to himself.

But he knew the truth. The main problem wasn't them being weak. However, he didn't know how to solve the problem. Such a thing didn't appear in the game.

Rook tightly closed his eyes. And just after that, he recalled the [hell] that had been just before his eyes at Karkata. It made him start to feel nauseous. That was the reality. His body was trembling. That scenery was what the battlefield was; until he lived the share Mary and the others died at the battlefield for, he needed to go past through all the battles he was going to face. This time's battle as well, his friends definitely were going to die. Rook intended to analyze every single word of the war strategy book, use all he had from his previous life knowledge and have his allies train. But without doubt, people were going to die. Even so, he needed to win this battle at all costs. It was necessary that he wins.

"It's alright... I.. Right now, I am Rook Barusak after all."

Rook muttered, depending on those words. And then, to focus his mind, he and once again opened his eyes.

"Let's go, Raku-ane. Soon, it will be the time our strategy will bring its results... I am relying on you, Raku-ane. We are putting everything on Raku-ane's timing."

"Alright. But you also shouldn't let your guard down. If you do so, you will lose once again."

"I-I know that!"

Rook gave a glance to his elder sister, who had reliability, but at the same time, he didn't know that for sure. Despite it being the battlefield, Raku was carefree. It was as if she was smoking her smoking pipe at her laboratory. But Rook, of Raku, whose attitude hadn't changed from her usual... strangely, was feeling extremely envious.

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Edgar Zerrik, who governed the city of Fert, was unusually taken by the anger.

First, the reason why he was irritated was because that jumped-up little girl... who despite being a filthy human, was sent to do the important mission of retrieving the crown of the Demon Lord. At the time he had heard the report, because of the anger, he had kicked a very expensive pot, sending it flying. The one that was the closest to the Sherr island was the one stationed at the center of Fert, Zerrik. That's why he assumed he was going to be appointed to this mission and had even arranged the preparations. Despite that, the human girl was the one dispatched, as if it was the most obvious thing. He didn't like that.

“Really! What is Charlotte-sama thinking!!”

Such a thing as to give her backing to a human was outrageous. Of course, he had guessed Charlotte had her own plans about that. However, he couldn't completely hold back his feelings. Zerrik was walking on the walls of the castle irritated. And it was at that moment.

“Hey, look at that. There is a pig walking there.”

“No, it's not a pig. It's a boar.”

“It is walking very ...Is it training for a circus performance?”

Zerrik had heard the second reason for his irritation.

An army of spiritualists were positioned in a perfect place where arrows barely couldn't reach them. No, rather than an army, it would be fine to call them a group. Several people were sitting with crossed legs and had been drinking alcohol since the daytime. And then, without holding back, they would shower the demons with abuse.

Even if he was to glare at them, they wouldn't fear. Rather, they would happily start insulting them.

“Yaah, it's glaring, it's looking at us!”

“If you hate it that much, then don't hide at your pig pen and come at us!”

“No. It wants to keep in his safe pen. It is so scared of dying.”

Zerrik clenched his teeth.

He mustn't lose to this abuse and go after them. They were clearly setting a trap. Perhaps they had a plan that would be taking a big chunk of their army at once if they were to go attack. He mustn't fall for their bait. Somehow, Zerrik maintained his self-control. While appreciating how the guards were trembling in anger for him, he kept in mind not to give attention to the voice of those people outside.

"Men, do not worry. Those are merely provocations. Let them do as they want until they get tired of it."

Somehow saying that to the guards, Zerrik took his leave. If he was to stay at this place longer than that, it didn't feel he would be able to hold himself back. However... Things wouldn't go well that easily. Just as he had turned his back to the spiritualists outside the wall, their laughs of ridicule increased. Because of the laughs, Zerrik unconsciously stopped his feet. At that moment, perhaps it was when he had ran out of luck.

"Ahahaha, look at their commander. He is turning his cute tail and running to his home."

"He is curling his little tail and running to mommy."

"Humans are so scary~. I am so scared of losing~. Help me, momm... Wait? Is it a child? The great general of Fert."

"It's a brat, a brat. A coward lower than a little girl."

Those words.

The instant he had heard those words, his veins welled up.

"Who is a coward lower than a little human girl!!?"

There was no mistake those spiritualists had said those words by coincidence. He knew there was definitely no way they would be speaking of a certain someone. He knew that. Zerrik knew it. But once the blood went to his head, he couldn't hold back anymore.



“Prepare for battle!! We are immediately going down there annihilate those insolent spiritualists!!”

In an instant, the battle preparations were ready and the gate was opened. There were no signs of him going to ride on his horse. He ran to the battlefield with his own trained leg strength. Zerrik and his soldiers were very much like wild boars charging. While laughing, the spiritualists that were drinking ran away.

“Don’t let them run! Follow them, follow them!!”

With smoke coming off his head, there was no way to stop Zerrik. While drawing his sword, Zerrik glared at the back of the running spiritualists. He could only see the enemy in front of his eyes. There was nothing in his head except annihilating the filthy humans in front of his eyes.

That’s why he didn’t notice.

“Yes, with that, it is the end.”

The smiling Raku scratched the match in her hand.

And then, she put fire onto a wire. The straw made wire, in an instant, were burned through and lighted the bomb connected to it. Once that single explosion happened, in a blink of an eye, it caused secondary explosions to happen one after another. The place the bombs were installed one next to another had already been left by the running spiritualists, and... It was the place Zerrik and his army were standing at now.

“Wha-, retreat!!”

Zerrik sensed the danger with his intuition.

However, overlaying his voice, the shine and shockwave of the explosions spread.

The moment the word regret went through his mind, the sight of Edgar Zerrik had become dyed in white.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 49**

# WAR COUNCIL OF THE COLOR OF SUNSET

Going up the ladders, Riku arrived at the lookout of the temple.

With the sun setting, the sea, which was surrounding the island, was being dyed in orange. Ordering the demons that were there to go down for a moment, Riku leaned against the edge of the lookout. The red hair of the same color as the sunset was fluttering with the breeze of the sea. While holding down her hair, Riku glared at the sea, annoyed. She didn't have good memories with the sea to begin with, and she felt that the more she spent her time on this mission, the more she came to hate it.

"I finally found you, ojou-chan."

To make Riku even more irritated, a voice was calling for her from behind. Vrusto, who was holding a eyeglass, had just gone up to the lookout. Despite how they were in their current situation, the weak smile didn't vanish from his face. Riku frowned

"What is it?"

"Stupid, it is obvious. It is so that we can think of a plan to deal with those guys."

Vrusto looked with his eyeglass at the direction of the sea. Even if he wasn't to look at the direction he was looking now, it would be possible to see the figure of the irritating fellows there.

In the present situation, the Sherr island was surrounded by all sides by ten warships.

Today, at dawn, was when they noticed the warships approaching.

...Going back a few days, after they suppressed the surviving spiritualists, they

immediately started to search for the Demon Lord crown. However, just going search crown-like objects in the vast treasury room that reached to the skies already took many efforts. The treasury room was so replete of treasures that those spiritualists from the temple couldn't be thought as the same ones that would grumble about how they abstained themselves from desires. Even after taking three days and three nights, they couldn't find all the crowns that were in there.

At the moment Riku would start to feel exhausted just by looking at that mountain of gold that was making trouble for her mission... At this same time, the report that Fert had fallen and that the military forces of the spiritualists were coming got to her.

“Really, what are we to do now...”

“For something like that, isn't it fine to just go attack them? We also have the warships those spiritualists fellows left to us.”

“That's what it would be a bad plan.”

Riku rejected Vrusto's opinion. And then, she gave a sidelong glance to the warships anchored at the shore of the island.

“They came at the same time the information about the fall of Fert reached us. In order words, they had immediately come to Sherr island right after they had captured Fert.”

“Then, shouldn't we be aiming for now that they are exhausted?”

“There is no way we can escape from those people that had their measures for the naval battle already set, you know?”

Riku had more or less read the book of war strategies. It was possible for her if it was to the extent of memorizing the knowledge about naval battles. However, she didn't actually have experience of them. Of course, she wasn't going to use her lack of experience as an excuse to avoid a naval battle. Not doing something because of lack of experience was the same concept of not doing a math question just because the methods of doing it was something you didn't study in class yet. But right now, the problem was something else.

“But why was it? Why did they came here right away?”

“That is... Because we had invaded them... That’s strange for sure.”

Being asked that by Riku, Vrusto crossed his arms troubled.

“With all the preparations they would do after capturing Fert, it would have been too short for them to go attack someone... And so, wouldn’t it be that they were planning on coming to Sherr island after attacking Fert?”

“This is only a possibility, though.”

If by any chance this guess was to be correct, then, the possibility of the report of the discovery of the location of the Demon Lord crown being a false information would become extremely high. No matter how they were to look for it, they would only be able to find similar objects.

“A strategy to lure the demons and take away a great part of their forces in one go, right? I guess they intended to attack them after we would get exhausted from the battle against the temple... But could it be that, out of their calculations, the people of the temple had lost the battle too fast? Looking at those ships we acquired, they still have the same numbers, and all of them are undamaged. They didn’t fight anyone after all.”

“...Then, wouldn’t it be better to attack them as expected?”

“But the ships we would be using are spiritualist ships, you know?”

Riku and her subordinates didn’t know in detail about the ships used by the spiritualists, but it wasn’t the case for the enemy. They were familiar with them; they had full knowledge from its highest places of the ship to its lowest. With them being that familiarized with their ships, to go attack them like that was too dangerous. How Riku had procured merchant ships on purpose in order to avoid naval battles had actually backfired in the end. Riku pondered.

“...The problem is: why are they not attacking?”

Even though a day had passed, there were no signs of them trying to land at the island. Of course, they were watching them for if they launched a night attack. However, even so,

they didn't see any signs of them being willing to attack. All they did was to keep surrounding them, as if they only wanted to keep them staying there.

"It doesn't look like they are confused about how something out of their expectations happened... Are they going for a siege?"

"I can't find any advantage for them to be doing a siege war. I have no idea what they are thinking about."

That's why they were troubled, without being able to think of any plans. Riku was hoping that by looking at their formation from a high place just like that, it would perhaps be possible for her to think of something, but she didn't get any useful information in particular by doing that. All she was able to do was to confirm the reality of them still being anchored from a distance without coming closer or distancing themselves.

"But you know, if we are not going for a naval battle, what are we going to do? Or are you planning on letting them land here on purpose?"

"At the worst case, it would be that. We can't go for a naval battle, so all we can do is that. ...Or if we go escape to Perikka somehow."

Of course, slipping through them in merchant ships that didn't have any weapons installed or anything of the sort was next to impossible. If they had the resolve to use up about one or two of the ships as baits, then maybe it would be possible to escape. However, originally, the people she would be sacrificing were soldiers of the Demon Lord army. If she was to be known as someone that sacrificed her own soldiers to run away, it was possible that Leivein's reputation would fall. Therefore, there was no way she could use her soldiers life like that.

If only she were to receive reinforcements, the tide of the battle would change. Since the port of Perikka still wasn't captured by the spiritualists, Riku still had some hopes that reinforcements could come. But no matter how, she couldn't imagine Charlotte sending her reinforcements. Imagining Charlotte saying something like "If it is only this much, do something about it yourself!" in a brazen posture, Riku let out a big sigh.

"...For now, let's send a report to the main forces of the Demon Lord army."

Because they were in an isolated island at the middle of the sea, she couldn't use Roppu.

That's why, without any other options, she entrusted that with an special kind of demon that could remain hidden in the sea for long periods of time. It was a demon that looked like a [walrus]; an animal that lived at the north of the sea that very long ago her younger brother had boastfully talked about once. While holding the package the letter was inside with his big hands that had fins, a demon that looked like a walrus left to the sea through the drainage channels.

Sucking in the snot of his nose, he muttered in manner that looked completely irresponsible.(I don't know how this would be called in english... Also, having it described in details like that makes it extra gross .-.)

“Either doing a suicide attack and having a honorable death or waiting for reinforcements.”

“Oh, I don't intend to die, you know? ...For me to die a dog's death in a island of spiritualists makes me want to vomit.”

Riku muttered as if she was saying that to herself. She needed to think of a plan somehow. Once again, Riku looked at the warships surrounding the island. In that instant, Shibira's prophecy came to her mind. But as to shook it away, she shook her head.

“There is no way I am dying at a place like this.”

The sun was sinking down at the sea. It was the time the moon would rise, replacing it. Bit by bit, the moon started to be covered by an eclipse. They themselves weren't having problems regarding the light, however, it would become easier to do a surprise attack with the darkness resulted from that. Being on guard at night day after day must be straining. Until then, Riku wanted to do anything she could to have all this end as soon as possible.

While smelling the smell of the sea she couldn't get used to, Riku kept thinking.

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At this same time, a war council was happening at the Demon Lord castle.

The impenetrable city of Fert was captured and the brave general, Edgar Zerrik, who would go cut his way through anything throw at him, had died in battle. And what came in as an accompaniment right after that was the information that the Sherr island had been surrounded by warships.

“At the present moment, the one who is at the Sherr island is the troops of Riku Barusak of my third army.”

Rudogar Gortoberuk, who had become one-armed, was the one to start the discursion at the meeting. With his remaining hand, as if protesting, he strongly hit the table. Because he had hit it too hard, the tea in his cup spilled out a bit. However, there was nobody that cared about it. All the leaders, who had their attention called, looked at Gortoberuk.

“I ask for reinforcements by all means.”

However, because of Gortoberuk’s words, everyone was making troubled faces. Keeping in silence, they wouldn’t move their mouths that looked to be weighted down by something. Gortoberuk pointed to one person among them... A field officer that had arms of a tiger.

“Hey, you bastard... What are you making that troubled face for? If you have any problems, then try saying it!”

“I must say that... I would want ask for the reinforcements as well.

Keity Foster, who had been called, got up from her seat and said in a troubled tone.

“However, with the problems we have presently, it is impossible. Our fleet is not so big for us to be sending help to a little island surrounded by ten spiritualist warships. Especially now that the port of Fert has been taken, we hold control over only the port of Perikka. We are already at our best efforts just to have the preparations for the defenses at Perikka. It’s not possible for us to spare any troops for that.”

Clenching her hand, Keity was showing a frustrated expression. Her true feelings was that she wanted to go save Riku, who had once fought alongside her. However, there was no way she could let herself be carried by the emotions of the moment and have such decisions cause harm. Hardening her heart, she opposed to Gortoberuk’s thoughts.



“Guh... However, have you forgot the accomplishments of Riku Barusak? Who was the one to recapture Myuuz? Who was the one to protect her highness, Charlotte-sama, and achieve a great victory at Karkata? It was lieutenant commander Riku Barusak!! Is it fine to let such an excellent first-class soldier die!?”( ぐぬう )

“However, there are other elites too.”

“Yes, that’s right. Rather than a jumped-up human, aren’t there exceptional demons of good lineages? There is nothing to care about only a single human.”

The generals and field officers that had been silent since now started to oppose Gortoberuk’s opinion. Gortoberuk’s situation was clearly bad. Even at normal conditions, it was close to impossible for Gortoberuk, who had fallen in reputation, to reverse this situation.

“...Charlotte-sama, we should send a messenger ordering them to kill as many enemies with their last efforts. Would this be acceptable?”

Keity asked for Charlotte’s view of the situation. Without saying anything, Charlotte kept silent. And then, at the instant her thin lips were about to open, someone raised one’s voice, interrupting her.

“No, we must send reinforcements.”

It was a declaration that cut off everything that was said until now. Gortoberuk, with eyes shining with the hope, and everyone else with eyes of criticism, looked at the owner of the voice. Representing everyone, Keity nervously asked the owner of that voice.

“Lieutenant general Adlar, does that... Does that mean you have some kind of plan?”

Without having feared anything, and without having twisted his face in grief either, lieutenant general Leivein Adlar kept his calm expression. Calmly standing up, he pointed at the map that was spread at the table.

“If we sent the ships stationed at Perikka, it would be possible to send them reinforcements.”

“However, the two or three ships we would have been able to deploy at best would never

be able to face against ten.”

“However, it is impossible for their encirclement to be perfect. There should be a hole somewhere. ...And besides, this is a situation we must send reinforcements even if risking the dignity of the Demon Lord army.”

Leivein’s words made the meeting room become silent in an instant. Right now, there was a demon that was saying they should go help a human at all costs and even relating that to dignity. However, with the glare of his blue eyes, it made everyone keep their mouth shut. With the complete silence, Leivein finally opened his mouth once again.

“The lieutenant commander Riku Barusak didn’t simply go fight. She went there to go look for the [the Demon Lord crown]. It is a necessity for us to retrieve the crown, which perhaps would be able to greatly affect our current situation.”

The whereabouts of the [crown of the Demon Lord] was something everyone had interest of. Since they found the perfect chance to get that treasured object that had fallen into the hands of the spiritualists, there was no way they could let it slip by.

With Leivein sitting on his chair and silently closing his eyes, everyone started to say their own opinions.

“In-indeed... If thinking that it is not to save the jumped-up human, but to retrieve the Demon Lord crown.. Doesn’t it make it look worth sending some warships from Perikka?”

“Bu-but! We don’t have any officers or soldiers that are skilled at naval battles enough to face that fleet of ten warships, you know?”

“In a realistic sense, it is impossible!”

“No, it is something that must be done!”

“Be silent.”

Charlotte’s cold voice echoed through the meeting room. Everybody went back to the silence. There was nobody foolish enough to object that. Giving a big nod, Charlotte looked at each of the faces of the demons that were called to the council room one by one.

Her eyes full of determination were representing what the final decision of this discussion would be.

Everyone waited for Charlotte's words. Because of how silent it was, the sound of Gortoberuk swallowing his saliva resounded awfully loud.

"Umu, I've heard everyone's thoughts. Now, I will pass my decision. The reinforcements to Sherr island are..."

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 50**

# CUTTING THROUGH THE NIGHT WIND

Karula flew, cutting through the night wind.

Karula was a messenger. Rabbit and panther demon messengers would be making use of their leg strength, but Karula would use her prided black wings, flapping them with full force in order to deliver messages. This evening as well, carrying the papers that had words written by Charlotte, the substitute Demon Lord, she was going straight to Sherr island.

Spreading open her own black wings, Karula pierced through the darkness of the night. She had earnestly continued to fly over the sea for three nights without sleeping. No matter how much of a veteran she was as a messenger, it still took a lot of effort to find landmarks when in the middle of the sea. Deciding the direction to go with the sun at the daytime and with the stars at the nighttime, she would fly.

That's why, just like today, this night had been very exhausting, with a sky difficult to find the stars, since most of it was filled with snowflakes. However, if she was flying above the enemy encampment, then it would be another story. In this case, it would be the best weather conditions to be flying at. Karula's black wings would disappear within the darkness of the night.

It was when she had been flying at a high height for some time. Distant in the horizon, she found a single light standing alone in the dark. There were tens of firelights. They were probably the ships that were anchored there. In curiosity, looking at the top of the mast of a ship, she saw the flag of the spiritualist fluttering there. Karula leaned her head to the side in wonder.

“...The numbers have increased.”

According to what she had heard from Charlotte, there were supposed to be about ten ships surrounding the island. Apparently, since they had received the information, the number of enemies had increased.

As to not be found by the spiritualists, Karula increased her height. Skillfully moving her wings, she increased her flying height, getting the impulse with the wind. After doing that, she could get a clear view of the island surrounded by the spiritualists. In that isolated island that had nothing of unusual, there was a temple that despite its modest design, was very big.

“Is it there?”

Eight or nine out of ten, that temple was her destination.

Having confirmed that, she glided towards the plaza that was at the center of the temple. In a way that wouldn't attract attention, she calmly, but very fast, flew down. Karula ignored the few demon soldiers tasked as lookouts that were pointing at her while talking about something to each other. Landing her feet at the fountain located at the center of the plaza, a feeling of exhaustion suddenly filled her with how it had been a long time since she had put her feet on the ground. Because of the feeling of exhaustion, her legs started feeling like they would crumble down.

However, if she was to be tired out with only this much, she wouldn't be qualified as a messenger. After trying to cheer herself up, she called for the soldiers that were nearby.

“From the fourth army of the Demon Lord army, affiliated to the messenger corps, I am the first lieutenant Karula Fezah. I came to deliver the orders from the provisional Demon Lord, Charlotte-sama. I would like to ask an audience with the lieutenant commander Riku Barusak urgently.”

“Y-yes. Certainly.”

The demon soldiers ran with so much vigor that looked as if they had their butts were lighted in fire. And then, shortly after, a girl full of the red color appeared.

In contrast to Karula, she was a girl that would stand out even in the darkness of the night. She had a red hair that looked as if it was burning and was wearing an armor red like blood. Guessing by the halberd she was carrying behind her back, she was probably the one that would be often called [the jumped-up human], lieutenant commander Riku Barusak.

With Karula politely lowering her head, Riku Barusak also lowered her head a little.

“Good work coming late at this night... Then, is it orders from that girl?”

With how, the provisional demon lord, Charlotte, having been called [that girl], Karula knitted her eyebrows puzzled at it. However, before anything, it was necessary to finish her mission first. Karula quietly took out the letter.

“Here it is.”

“Thank you.”

Riku Barusak brusquely tore open the letter she received from Karula. And then, with eyes that didn't seem to be expecting much of anything, she started to follow the words that were written at the letter.

“Resuming, that girl... Is sending reinforcements to us?”

“Is there anything you are dissatisfied about?”

“No... Only, it is not written when, how, and on what scale the reinforcements coming are. What am I supposed to do about these lack of details?”

Riku showed Karula the letter. Apparently, it seems she didn't completely believe on the information about the reinforcements at all.

Seeing the way she had read the letter and how without any hesitations she didn't address Charlotte with any honorifics, Riku Barusak must hate Charlotte very much. Karula leaned her head to the side puzzled at the difference between what the rumors said about her. Karula had heard about how Riku had protected Charlotte despite all her injuries. Was this rumor only made up lies?

“So what is it now? Are going back to ask them about that?”

“No. I think that putting in consideration the possibility that the letter might fall in the hands of the enemy, the details weren't written down. If everything goes well, after finishing all the preparations, the reinforcements should come after one week.”

“...One week.”

With Karula’s answer, Riku narrowed her eyes. Putting her thin finger at her chin, Riku was thinking about something. And then, while showing a treacherous smile as if she was plotting something, she started speaking like she had just remembered about something.

“Then, you... When are you planning on leaving?”

“What would you be talking about?”

“Is it fine for you not to go to where Charlotte...-sama is to tell her that you’ve delivered the message?”

“No, actually, the one leading the forces is lieutenant general Adlar-sama, so...”

“You should have said that sooner!”

The instant Karula had talked about Adlar, Riku Barusak’s expression in her face changed.

The face that seemed to be plotting something bad completely changed, becoming a serious and honest face. She still seemed to be thinking of something, but she was completely different from how she was a few moments ago. The glint on her eyes now were like a sharp blade. Because of that sudden change, Karula started to step back. However, Riku didn’t let Karula run away.

“In order words, it means that you’ve been tasked with being the bridge of communication between me and captain Leivein, right?”

“Yes.”

“But there is no way I can be exchanging letters all the time, right... I can only use her for serious matters... For the time being, go rest for tonight. Second lieutenant Asty, go guide first lieutenant Fezah to an empty room.”



Saying only that, Riku Barusak left the place. With Karula distractedly following that small back with her eyes, the female demon called Asty waved her hand in front of her.

“...What are you doing?”

“Ah, it is because you looked to be daydreaming-de gozaru, thus I did that. Did you get surprised by lieutenant commander’s change in behavior-de gozaru?”

Asty was broadly smiling. With how Karula could only give a wry smile back without being able to say anything, Asty probably ended up misunderstanding something. She spoke in such good spirits that it looked like she would start humming anytime.

“Lieutenant commander is someone that clearly distinguishes between who she likes and hates-de gozaru. Most likely, just now, for if Charlotte-dono was coming, she had a strategy of having both the spiritualists and the reinforcements destroy each other going through her mind. she . Ah, it’s very fortunate it is lieutenant general Adlar; thank goodness.”

“...Is this what you are supposed to be happy about?”

Being asked that by Karula, Asty started to shook her head in panic, calling attention to her as to tell her not to disclose about what she had just said. Of course, it would have been fine if she were to tell Charlotte that. If Charlotte was to hear about this, it would be possible to have Riku receive punishment. However, Karula didn’t intend on reporting her about this.

In this single exchange, Karula had the feeling she had just seen a sliver of Riku Barusak’s rumored [insanity]. If she was to poorly provoke her, if she ended up being killed behind the scenes, it wouldn’t be a coincidence.

“I will only be carrying out what I was tasked to.”

Saying only that, she decided to forget that exchange of a few moments ago.

What was important now was to have herself covered in a warm blanket and sleep. While wishing for a short rest, the black winged messenger walked through the dark temple.

---

Rook Barusak started to get tired of the sea.

Even if he was to turn around, without any changes in the scenery, there would only be the blue sky and sea endlessly extending to the horizon. At first, he would let out words of admiration.

However, after being there for one week, he obviously would grow tired of the scenery. Lying sprawled at the deck that was wavering in accord to the waves, he let out a small sigh. Even though he wasn't feeling seasick, he was starting to yearn for the land.

Lying at the deck of the ship, he quietly closed his heavy eyelids. Until there were any movements from the enemy, there wouldn't be anything to do in particular. He didn't feel like studying, but even then, he also wouldn't feel like moving around to spend his energy in something. With the lullaby of the waves hitting the ship getting distant, Rook was nodding off, falling into the world of dreams.

"What's the matter, Rook?"

The one to wake him up was his biological elder sister, Raku Barusak.

After waking up, the sky that was supposed to be blue had already become black. In the sky, an uncountable amount of stars started to appear.

"What... It is Raku-ane."

Perhaps because he had been out in the sun for some time, what would have usually been his abnormally white skin had become light-brown. It was somewhat giving off a charming adult-like charm.

"By the way... Until when are we going to keep surrounding Sherr island?"

Rook and his army had captured Fert, and after that, immediately headed to Sherr island.

The one that had said they would be using Sherr island was Raku. In order to reduce some of the fighting force of Fert, she leaked false information. Rook didn't know what kind of information she leaked. All he knew was that a situation which made the demon side send troops to Sherr at all costs had truly been made.

The soldiers sent to capture the Sherr island weren't from Perikka, which was located in the same sea, but troops contained with strong sailors brought up on Fert. What's more, it was unexpectedly easy to get to Sherr island from Fert. By doing that, a small gap on their defenses is made. Aiming for that gap, it became possible to do what they had done; to provoke the soldiers at Fert, and capture it in one go.

All that was left to be done to Rook was only one thing. ...It was to recapture Sherr island, which had fallen in the hands of the demons.

"I know that right now, the ones at Sherr island are demons that are considered strong even among the ones of Fert. But you know, we also have fifteen warships. If we were to attack now..."

"Nonsense. It is important to lure out the weakened enemy."

Raku rejected Rook's murmurings. She was giving a gaze of scorn that was as if she was looking at some stupid thing. That gaze made Rook's irritation get worse. Calmly standing up, he glared at Raku.

"Many spiritualists are being made hostages at the temple of Sherr island. Isn't it for best to go save them as soon as possible?"

"There is no need to get emotional about defeated spiritualists, Rook. The demons aren't used to naval battles. It is definitely impossible for them to launch an attack to the unexpected and passive enemy that had come right after their victory. Besides, they are limited by anything edible there is at that temple. After one month, it should be exhausted... In other words, the more time it passes, the more in disadvantage the demons are. After they become weakened, once the chance comes, we, who are in a flawless position, are to reap our reward. There is no way we can let the demons have an advantageous fight after carelessly trying to land at their shore."

Raku shook her head.

Rook knew the theory behind what Raku wanted to say.

Spiritualists that were defeated by demons would be punished because of that. The way Rook was ordered to attack the impregnable city of Fert was the same as telling him to die, throwing into the battle only to wait his death. He was aware of that. However, it wasn't the same as immediately being killed.

But once those spiritualists had become captives, they had lost their rights of life and death to the demons. It was unknown if the demons, who had killed Rebecca, who was still an child still developing her strength, without hesitations, would follow the formal way of treat the prisoners.

“Hey, calm down. You are getting too worked up.”

“It is Raku-ane that is too calm. ...What?”

At that time, looking over Raku's shoulder, Rook saw something moving.

From the Sherr island, there was a fleet approaching amidst the dim darkness. Their numbers were of four ships. Without straying from their goal, they were going straight to them. Before Rook could shout anything, Raku, who became aware of the fleet, raised her voice.

“The enemy has moved! Immediately have the archer units prepared!! Pour a shower of arrows upon them!!”

It was a voice that looked as if it had cut off the darkness of night. The half-sleeping soldiers woke up and gallantly went to their positions. Getting her own bow, Raku drew it, readying an arrow ready. Rook also ran next to Raku, and just like he had been taught by Selestinna, he held his bow. Aiming for the shadows of the demons standing on the ship at the center of the fleet, everyone waited for Raku's signal.

“Now! Shoot your arrows!!”

Since the spiritualists had surrounded the Sherr island, today had been the fifteenth day. In the place of the moon, which wasn't showing up, the whole sky was filled with stars.

Together with the sound of the arrows cutting through the wind, the curtains for the next act, the naval battle of Sherr island, were cut through and taken down.

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# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 51**

# CHOOSING A DIFFERENT FUTURE

A great number of arrows poured down upon the four ships.

It was a rain of arrows empowered with demon banning power. While closing in the enemy ships as to surround them, without giving them any chances of fighting back, they continued their attack. Over the sea, the sounds of the arrows cutting through the air and hitting the ships reverberated.

If the spiritualists were the one receiving that focused fire, they wouldn't be able to endure. Even if the demons wanted to get away from that place, out of the ship, all there would be was obviously going to be sea. Even if they wanted to run away by swimming, it would be distant to get to Sherr island, and would at most take three days swimming without rests, thus it being impossible.

Besides, even if there were demons adapted to the sea, the result would still be obvious. Just as they would jump to the sea, they would be shot at.

Even if they were to fight to their end, it was hell. Even if they were to try run away, it also was hell.

Regardless on which of the two they would end up at, there was no future for the demons.

“That's right, scream more!”

As if he had gone mad, he kept shooting arrows. Many times, he would aim at those demons that were standing like poles.

May them raise more and more screams and try to run for their life. May they become desperate and try to resist to death. Rather, he wanted them to do so; when they would try come fight back, he would instead kill them all. This was going to be their deserved punishment. It was the retribution for killing the lofty Selestinna, the young Rebecca, the earnest Kurumi and the devoted Mary. While shouting, saying the demons may go regret their actions after dying, he drew his bow.

“Fight back, hey. Come, attack us! I will completely destroy all your hope!”

He was completely being carried by his anger. Once their ship closed their distance to them, they would board at his ship. And then, he would cut them one by one. He wished for them to come soon, or then to end up being annihilated by the arrows.

Rook started to feel angry at the demons that wouldn't come attack. But suddenly, he felt a bad feeling. With how the demons weren't coming attack them, perhaps it was because they had no way to deal with the fierce arrow shower. The demons being encircled by all the sides; there were no gaps to escape through. Maybe, with no food to sustain the soldiers, rather than having the soldiers being gradually weakened, they launched an attack. In that case, it would have been fine for them to keep attacking for a little bit longer. But despite that, they didn't attack them. Instead, it felt as if they were going to retreat back to Sherr island.

Rook stopped the hand shooting with his bow and narrowed his eyes. Because he wasn't seeing well at this darkness, he couldn't see any of the faces of the demons that were on the ship. Perhaps this was because it was at the dead of the night, in a night without the moonlight. Only their faint silhouettes could be seen.

“...Raku-ane, there is something strange.”

Rook looked at Raku's direction. It seemed Raku had already noticed the abnormality before Rook. Putting down her bow, she leaned at the edge of the ship. As if she was thinking about something, she frowned her eyebrows.

“...Raku-ane?”

“Shut up for a bit; you are distracting me.”

With Raku's serious tone, Rook became silent. Without even giving a glance to Rook, she took out the eyeglass that was in a bag at her waist. It seems she intends on checking the situation of the enemy.

And then, Rook also started to think about the situation himself. Rook started to ponder about the reason for that bad feeling.



The first thing he thought about was the first battle of Karkata. At that time, just like now, right after the start of the battle, he had one-dimensionally handled the situation. They followed the retreating demons to the Karkata fortress and were taken by surprise, falling into their trap.

Perhaps, this time too they were acting as if they had already been defeated and were planning on having them fall into their trap.

“No, it’s different.”

Rook shook his head.

The demons hadn’t been aware of the existence of that trap back then, or at least the demons he had directly fought against. They had become desperate and fought putting their life on line. Looking at their fleet, he couldn’t tell any desperation coming from them. And so, why was it that the demons weren’t becoming desperate? Even though they were in such a hopeless situation... Rook gasped in a low voice.

“Ah.”

And at that moment, the direction of the demon ships started to change. Apparently, they acknowledged their inferiority and intended to retreat back to Sherr island. There was nothing to be surprised about. But rather than being happy about their great victory, the bad feeling that wouldn’t fade away remained. While his mood was getting gloomy, Raku, who stood next to him, raised a piercing shout.

“Change to fire arrows! Put their ship on fire! Immediately!”

“Fire!?”

Because of the unexpected words declared by her elder sister, Rook had his eyes open-wide. Although the demon ships were at a distance that it wouldn’t be possible for them to board at their ships, they were still inside their range of fire. If the direction of the wind were to change, it was possible the fire would blow to their direction. That’s why they didn’t use fire arrows before. Despite that, without hesitation, Raku said the soldiers to do so.

“Don’t do it, Raku-ane! It’s dangerous!”

Rook wondered if Raku was sane.

Being called by Rook, Raku’s expression changed. Her face was getting more and more grim.

“Fool! Look well at the demons standing on those ships!”

Raku pressed the eyeglass onto Rook’s chest. Taking the eyeglass that had been brusquely given to him, he looked at the demon ships. And then, he let out a surprise grasp.

Until now, they had kept firing arrows at the silhouettes thought to be demons. However, the true identity of those silhouettes were only dolls made of straw. The tens of dolls were at the ships with their hands spread wide. Everywhere at the areas of their chest, head and belly were deeply pierced by arrows. Close to them, several demon were controlling the ship while they had been in cover from the arrow rain.

“This... Such a thing.”

Blood left from Rook’s body.

It was as if they had given the enemy the arrows as a present. Of course, once the arrows had been fired, they would become unusable. However, if their conditions are good enough, it is possible to use them once more. The arrows he had been firing with hatred in his heart became a benefit to the enemy. Rook weakly fell down, sitting at the floor.

“Get a hold of yourself! Rook, you are the commander, you know?”

Being hit at the back by Raku, Rook jumped up to his feet. The fire arrows followed after the retreating ships. Being poured with fire arrows, one of the ships began to burn, raising a roaring sound. However, the remaining three ships regrettably got away from the encirclement area and went back. They had lost a great amount of arrows, and the demons got hold of a great number of arrows as their spoils of war. At first glance, it had been a won battle. However, that was obviously a defeat. Rook punched the wall of the ship. With a numbing feeling, pain went through his fist.

“...Raku-ane, how many are the remaining arrows?”

“...Unfortunately, if we were to have thirty arrows for each person now, it would actually be too good.”

With that, they needed to go back to Fert resupply their arrows.

The ships that didn't exhaust as many arrows comparatively were left as lookouts and the ships that couldn't fight anymore returned to Fert for the moment. After talking with Raku about their next moves for tomorrow, he waveringly went back to his bedroom.

“Once again, I lost.”

He was supposed to be the main character.

The center of this world was supposed to be himself.

But then, why did he keep losing?

He was supposed to be enjoying his life at this new world. But as if he began rolling down through a hill road, the situation was getting worse and worse. Where did he do wrong? His difference from Rook Barusak of the game was only to the extent of him making policy and management reformations for the sake of the people.(TL note: It doesn't say what kind of reformations he did... So I just put there what most likely his reformations were about.) He couldn't have thought that caring about his people would lead to such a bad fortune. As far as he was concerned, Rook knew there was something in himself that was the cause for all this, but he didn't know what this problem was.

“That's the worst, really.”

Even though he had thought he would be living a fun life once he reincarnated in a new world...

Sighing, right when Rook was about to open the lock of the door of his bedroom and go inside, he suddenly noticed that somebody had entered his room. The lock should have

been locked . There were no duplicate keys; the only one to hold the key to his room was Rook himself.

“Who? ...Is it a demon?”

After going through that battle, he couldn't throw away the possibility that a demon was able to sneakily boarded in the ship. Rook's wariness increased. Moving his hand to the sword in his waist, he prepared himself as to be able to fight anytime. Holding his breath, he waited for the move of the enemy.

And as he did that, the one to visit his room had started to weirdly laugh.

“Kukuku... There is no need for you to be that scared.”

The one standing there was a handsome winged young man.

Although Rook suspected him to be a demon, any of the species of demons written about in the documents corresponded to his appearance. However, once he was clearly not a human, Rook decided to assume the person standing in front of his eyes was a demon. While preparing for battle, Rook exchanged glances with the handsome young man.

“Who are you?”

“I am a shinigami, you see.”

The young man that had just named himself showed Rook some kind of old scroll. The old scroll had tiny letters written closely packed. The shinigami was waving that scroll that seemed to be something that would be at a museum. While raising the corners of his mouth as if he was planning mischief, the shinigami got hold of the perplexed Rook, whose pair of eyes weren't smiling at all.(TL note: I don't know how to translate this... The verb used is 捕らえる, but.... What is that supposed to mean in this case? I guess the shinigami approached Rook like those scenes the guy wanna be cool and say something serious.)

“I have come to grant your wishes, Rook Barusak.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 52**

# .THE MAIN CHARACTER

“You’ve come... To grant my wishes?”

Rook’s body trembled by those alluring words.

It wasn’t fear; his body was trembling with the joy that was welling up deep inside.

At the moment the person in front of his eyes named himself as a [shinigami], Rook misunderstood, thinking he had come to take his life. However, it seems he was overthinking. Something like granting wishes was exactly what Rook would have wanted.

Rook’s hand calmly moved away from the handle of his sword. With his eyes shining, he looked at the shinigami.

“Is this true?”

“Yes, it’s the truth.”

The shinigami made a gentle smile. Looking at the smile, Rook swallowed the saliva in his mouth.

The things he wished for were many that it wouldn’t be enough to count with his fingers. First of all, he wanted to redo the actions he had made before. The reality had already started to deviate from the plot of the game. He wanted to correct the mistakes. Besides that, he wanted power. He wanted the power of a main character who wouldn’t know defeat. He also wanted the people that had died to come back to life. The more he thought, the more desires showed up in his mind.

“I...”

Rook was about to say his wishes, but he suddenly gave up on the idea.

He remembered the anime and manga he used to see a long time ago in his previous world. The characters in the stories that would be saying things like “Shall I grant your desires?” or something like that were all villains for the most part. Even if it wasn’t a villain, it wouldn’t be a good person. They would whisper words one would want to hear and then take one’s most precious things as the compensation. Sometimes it would be your soul, and sometimes it would be someone important to you. Even if they don’t steal anything from you in the surface, it was possible to think that they would distort the meaning of the wish in a bad way.

Thinking about that, his feeling of wariness that was dispersing once again started to grow.

“What’s the matter? Say your wishes.”

The shinigami seemed to be a good person from the expression she was showing. However, it was impossible to see it as anything other than a false smile.

In order to take distance from the shinigami, he gave one step back. Grasping the handle of his sword once again, he readied himself to unsheathe it anytime.

“Before telling you my wishes, there are many things I would like to ask you.”

“Hou, what would they be?”

“This... What is the compensation for the wishes?”

Rook timidly asked.

Doing that, the shinigami’s wings trembled in happiness. He was showing a face full of ecstasy that was as the shinigami had been waiting for his question. The shinigami pressed at him an old sheet of paper.

“Of course, it is your soul.”

Rook glanced at the paper. With the tiny letters written there, there were many important

detail concerning the contract. As the shinigami had said, the written content was talking about it being one soul per wish. With doubting eyes, he looked from one corner to another to confirm there were no loopholes. After reading many times from the first letter to the last one, he started to think if he didn't have anything else to ask.

“Is what it is written here all the truth?”

“Yes, it's the truth. In exchange for your soul, I may grant you your wishes. However...”

Full of maliciousness, he continued his words.

“Do not forget you are getting it in exchange for soul. Think thoroughly so that you can wish something worth exchanging your soul.”

“It's obvious I will. Is it something you need to go your way to tell me?”

With Rook saying that in an untrusting manner, the shinigami licked his lips. The gross tongue looked like a cunning snake. It looked that if Rook was to lower his guard, he would be eaten. While raising his guard, he took the paper.

“Of course. Whether it is a human, whether it is a demon, each fundamentally have only one soul. Therefore, they can only ask for a single wish. Whether they desire for riches that wouldn't be used up even in a lifetime or desire a woman more beautiful than the princess of the Shiidoru kingdom as a wife. However, the world is wide. There are a few existences that can be considered exceptions.”

As if Rook's wariness didn't matter, the shinigami kept speaking. It was like he was an actor that had been given a role to act. Rook narrowed his eyes.

“Exceptions?”

Rook became uneasy with the word “exception”. It's not like he had already decided to go with the shinigami's deal yet, but it was necessary to get a grasp of everything related to the contract, and that even more if considering he would be trading a wish for his soul. If something unexpected was to happen later, it would have already been too late.

“What do you mean by saying exception? Are you saying that I am an exception or



something?”

“Exception... Is what I was going to say, but you have only one soul. Do you know about the caterpillar fungus? It is a mushroom that parasites the insect, and once it becomes spring, it spouts from its body. Its roots stretch through the body of the insect, taking control over it. The parasitized insect has everything stolen from it and dies, while on the other hand, the mushroom would have its life connected to the body. It’s very interesting, isn’t it? ...Hm? You are making a face that is asking what this has to do with the contract, aren’t you? Well, well, since I am in good spirits, I will tell you. ...Well then, let me tell you a story... It is a story of fifteen years ago. Fifteen years ago, a little boy has been born at the Barusak family.”

Rook became perplexed at the shinigami’s explanation.

He couldn’t understand what his wishes, the things about that mushroom, and his own birth had to do with each other. However, suddenly, a dreadful feeling went through him at the nape of his neck. It felt as if he shouldn’t ask the shinigami any more than that. He had the feeling that, in order for him to keep being himself, he mustn’t ask about it.

However, on the other hand... the thought of wanting to have the compensation become as much viable as possible so that he could have his wish granted was also strong. Without interrupting the shinigami’s words, Rook decided to hear it out.

“It was a boy of good appearances; he had taken all the good parts of his father and mother. However, there was a problem with his soul. When he had just been born, he had been parasitized... by another soul. With the many years passing, bit by bit, his own soul was overwritten, with the other soul successfully taking the control. This is what it would be the you of now... Rook Barusak.”

The shinigami calmly declared. His white and thin finger that was just like a woman’s was pointed to Rook. Because of the surprise, Rook wasn’t able to say anything.

In other words, Rook wasn’t truly the main character. All he did was nothing more than killing the main character he yearned for and standing in his place. An eerie aftertaste that couldn’t be described started to fill his heart. But without caring about how Rook was, the shinigami gave the final blow.

“At any rate, you have been impersonating your “original” soul. You would make decisions that seemed to be what it would choose, and saying charming words, you’ve

been winning over many beautiful girls. Ah, please, don't misunderstand. I am praising you. The you that was desperately acting while adding in some improvisation of your own was the best. You've made me have enough of fun. ...However, you know, the soul that is tasty looking is yours, and not the one you are parasitizing. That soul had become completely dried up and is not edible anymore."

The shinigami kept speaking in his tone of voice that looked as if he was performing in a drama.

"...And because of that, I can only grant you one wish. That's why it is better if you carefully think it through. What does your real self truly desires? Please, think until your brain juice seeps out. The more you suffer, the more the soul becomes tasty."

Each of the words spoken by the shinigami heavily weighted onto him.

It was just as the shinigami had said. He was Rook Barusak, but he wasn't Rook Barusak.

The Rook of his previous world yearned for the Rook of the game. Without any flaws in his appearance, using his strong spiritualist powers, he quickly rose in the world; he had cute girls falling in love for him and was liked by everyone. The Rook of his previous life couldn't get away his mediocre limits. No, it was a bit worse than mediocre. He wanted to become like Rook. Maybe that's why he became absorbed in the game, and after he reincarnated in this world, he started to act like Rook.

...However, he was only acting like the main character.

Even if the himself of now was Rook Barusak, he wasn't the main character.

"I...I..."

Rook became agitated. If he wasn't the main character, then what was all he had been doing until now? Wasn't he only a farce pretending to be the main character? What in the world his true self wished for?

"Your own decisions also caused interesting results. ...You might know about it already."

Despite all that happened, Rook wanted to think the ones at his surroundings to be the

ones in the wrong.

He did nothing bad. He caused the death of many heroines and subordinates, and moreover, of the real Rook, but it wasn't his own fault. It was all bad luck and because they had been too weak.

"It seems you will take a long time. When you decide on your wish, call me in a loud voice."

Saying that, he came closer to Rook's face. And then, before he left, he whispered next to his ears. From this whisper, Rook felt a feeling of fear; it was as if someone touched the back of his neck with a wet hand.

"Think well... What the real you longs for."

Those words greatly affected him.

While laughing in a irritant way, he vanished from Rook's eyes. It was as if his figure had dissolved into the air. However, there were many black feathers scattered in the floor. This meant that all this conversation until now wasn't a dream. Bending down, Rook took one of these feathers. The feeling the it gave and its weight were just like of the feathers in a wing of a bird.

"The real me... What do I want to do?"

He wanted to have the bearing of pride just like a main character, he wanted to be surrounded by heroines just like a main character, and he wanted a talent acknowledged by everyone just like a main character.

However, he felt the true himself also desired many other things.

Maybe he had wanted to become a true resident of this world. No, it wasn't that. Rook pushed aside. Starting to think that he must also have desire for other things, he looked deep into himself. And at that moment, he trembled.

Deep inside himself, there was nothing. It was only a empty dark hole. Rook was being pulled to hole that its bottom couldn't be seen. He became scared. Bringing himself out of

that hole, he hurriedly put its lid on. Rook turned his eye away from. However, he would not forget that scene he had seen.

That was the himself when he wasn't acting as the main character, the true Rook Barusak.

In the dark room, Rook kept looking at the feathers left by the shinigami with empty eyes.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 53**

# REFUNDING BEFORE WITHDRAWING

From the horizon tinged in red, the sun slowly showed its face.

By this time, most of the ships that were encircling the Sherr island had withdrawal. Riku as leaning her hips at the edge of the lookout. Even if she weren't to use the eyeglass, she knew the amount of ships remaining very well. There were only three spiritualist ships remaining. Each of the ships were in their respective position surrounding the island.

Looking at the spiritualist numbers, which had been cut down in one go, Riku's expression naturally became softer.

"To think this would go so well."

It was about what happened last night.

Riku had launched an attack towards the spiritualist ships. However, this was not for them to engage in a battle. Compared to humans, demons had keener eyes for the night. However, even with that, it was possible to see the results of casually going for a night attack.

Before they could even start their attack, a rain of arrows had poured down at them. To demons, the demon banning power infused arrows would cause fatal wounds. Unless a miracle happened, there was no chance of victory. If the one leading was Gortoberuk or Charlotte, they would perhaps force their way through with their idealism. However, employing this idealism would also restrict the person as much as the enemy. The difference in strength was obvious; recklessly attacking was too dangerous.

Therefore, not attacking was the best option.

However, it had been confirmed that Leivein was coming for them. Even if it is a one in a

thousand chance, there was no way Riku could let his ship suffer damage. In that case, what was she to do? And from there, she thought of that plan.

“Yaah, as expected of ojou-chan.”

Vrusto let out a whistle. Apparently having already finished packing, he lifted a big sack to his shoulder.

“For us to have snatched their own arrows, right. Because of that, mister enemy can’t fight anymore and has to go back home.”

“They must be surprised. When they come back from supplying, they won’t even know there won’t be anyone in the island.”

Riku gave back a satisfied smile.

What should be done so that Leiven’s ship is not attacked? That was something very simple. It was to make the enemy side retreat, even if it is temporary.

A great amount of demon-shaped straw dolls were set in the ship in large quantities. It was very fortunate that this night without moon was very dark, making it impossible for the straw dolls to be seen through. As planned, the spiritualists that had mistaken the straw dolls for demons were happily shooting the arrows.

Because of that, the spiritualists became short on arrows and the demon side became enriched in arrows. Of course, there were some whose arrow heads became damaged, making it not useable. However, most of the arrows acquired were possible to be used again.

Their side was able to get in its hands a great amount of arrows, while the number of theirs were used up in one go. Such a delicious situation.(TL note: I don’t know if “delicious” in japanese has other meanings or if this is just because subjective is cool and etc...)

“Then... Since you came here, does it mean that you finished the preparations?”

“Yes, everyone has arranged themselves. We can depart at any time. ...Now, we are only waiting for ojou-chan’s command.”

“...I see.”

Saying only that, Riku went away from the edge of the lookout. Adjusting the position of the halberd at her back, she herself headed to the ship that was going to be used for the escape. Most of the demons had already embarked the ships they had embarked previously. Waiting at their own positions, they checked their bow and arrows, and checked for nicks in their own blades.

Riku noticed the female demon that had black wings deep in the crowd. Even though they were black wings, they weren't scaled wings like Leivein's. Her wings were full of plumage that made it seem comfortable to use it as a blanket and sleep.

Before anyone else, Riku approached the black winged demon. The black winged demon noticed Riku getting closer to her. Interrupting whatever work she had been doing, she lowered down her head.

“Thanks for your hard work last night, first lieutenant Karula Fezah. ”

Karula shook her head.

“It is because you've kept their eyes fixed downwards that I was able to easily fly past them.”

“I see. Then... Leivein's troops should be coming soon, right?”

Riku wanted to confirm. Karula silently nodded. It wouldn't be weird if they were able to see Leivein's ships at the horizon anytime now.

Their own ships that were leaving the island and the ships heading to the island. And also the remaining spiritualist ships that would be in a pincer attack by those two. Even if one didn't particularly think too much about it, it was obvious to imagine the destiny of them who had their numbers and fighting potential decreased.

“Thank you. This has been thanks to you.”



After giving some small appreciation, Riku looked at the direction of the horizon. She couldn't see the silhouettes of Leivein's ships. However, since they were to soon arrive, she wanted to finish tidying up. Deciding that, she gave her order.

"We are departing. Burn all the remaining ships."

Together with the echoing voice, the demons shot fire arrows.

All at once, the fire arrows spread fire through the ships that were still anchored at Sherr island and spread to the temple. They were burning while raising a rumbling sound. The hot wind carried the fragrance of the burning smell and the smell of the sea.

With the flames behind them, Riku's subordinates started to have the ships they were embarked at moving.

Of course, the enemy wasn't stupid. Noticing their fighting spirit, they immediately readied themselves for battle. The three warships that were surrounding the island gathered up and moved towards the three merchant ships that were about to depart in a way to have them surrounded.

However, it was predicted that this was going to happen.

"Give those arrows we received from them back."

The spiritualist side was low on arrows. Therefore, their actions were leaned towards economizing them. They should be intending on closing up to them and boarding their ships. In fact, the amount of arrows being shot at them weren't in the same scale of last night.

Compared to that, the amount of arrows the demons had were more than enough. They had thoroughly reversed their positions.

"Of course, we are not planning on simply giving them back. We are giving back with interests."

Saying that, Riku also readied an arrow at her bow. Taking aim, she shot the arrow, aiming for the spiritualist ships.

Before they escaped, they had to properly give the arrows they had borrowed back to the spiritualists.

Together with the interest of [fire].

By the time Leivein's troops arrived, everything was over.

The white temple that stood high at Sherr island was covered with a veil of scorching flames. And also, the spiritualist ships all floated over the sea in the same manner; in a scorched black manner, as if they had become cinders.

Giving a glance to all these results, Leivein walked towards Riku. Riku straightened up her back more than usual and gave a salute that was better done than anyone's.

"Captain Leivein, thank you for coming for our rescue."

"You've hold out well, lieutenant commander Riku Barusak."

Receiving Leivein's words of praise, Riku had a face full of happiness. But then, a feeling of regret started to well up.

If the results were supposed to be that, it would have been better for her to have done this from the start. It would have been possible to escape the island without troubling Leivein. While feeling the hot wind at her back, Riku slightly hanged her head down.

"...You seem dissatisfied."

"N-no. It's no such... Thing."

With Riku raising her face in panic, Leivein started to look at Riku as if he was thinking about something. A strange feeling of tension started to well up. With the tension that would sting the skin, Riku swallowed a mouthful of saliva.

Riku suddenly remembered the memories of the garden party. At that time, she had confronted with Leivein and tasted this feeling of tension.

After those memories that had become distant surfaced at the nook of her mind, Leivein let out a tired sigh.

“It is because I was coming to help you that you’ve thought of this strategy. If you were to be ordered to do something about it yourself, you would have thought of another method. That’s why there is nothing to be ashamed of. You can be proud of yourself.”

Saying only that, he turned his back to Riku.

Having been said there was nothing to be ashamed of, Riku’s heart become slightly lighter. However, in the end, the reality she wasn’t able to accomplish anything didn’t change. Although she had been directly dispatched by Charlotte, without finding the Demon Lord crown that was being guarded at Sherr island, she had miserably retreated.

Yes, in the end, Riku hadn’t been able to accomplish anything.

“I have done nothing of use.”

“No. We discovered the reality that the Demon Lord crown is not here. Only that is more than enough of an accomplishment.”

However, Leivein. While showing a calm expression that didn’t look to be feeling anything in particular, he patted Riku’s head.

“The cause of the failure of this mission was because of the decision of dispatching troops despite the lack of information. The one to receive punishment for this occasion is the one that had gathered such information. You have only followed the orders. You’ve done nothing wrong. It is fine to look for the Demon Lord crown once the Demon Lord has been revived.”

Leivein kept stroking Riku’s hair. He stroke the red hair that was hated by everyone with gentleness and love. With that, Riku had finally felt like she calmed down.

However, this moment of bliss didn't last for too long. Taking away his hand from Riku's head, Leivein headed to his own ship. Riku slowly touched the hair Leivein had touched. Touching it like that, it felt to her as if there was still some warmth of his big hand remaining there.

"Hey, ojou-chan. We need to get out of here soon."

As if to hurry Riku, Vrusto said. While frowning her eyebrows, she took her hand away from her red hair.

"I already know it. Quickly start the preparations."

The spiritualist ships that had retreated early in the morning had only gone back to Fert to resupply their arrows. After finishing resupplying them, they would probably head back to here. If they didn't leave from this place soon, they would be followed after by them. If they were caught by them, there wouldn't have any meaning for their escape.

Riku once more turned back to the temple that was covered in flames.

The walls that would be shining in white had been completely charred. The fire of the same color of Riku's hair reflected upon the blue sky.

Suddenly, it was possible to hear a sound. The wind wasn't blowing towards them, so it shouldn't be possible to hear the sounds of the temple crumbling down.

However, she felt she had heard that melody that made her heart tremble before.

"Ojou-chan, give us some hand here!"

"Even if you don't tell me, I know."

With Vrusto's voice, Riku came back to her senses.

While looking towards the horizon that was in direction to Perikka, Riku came back to her own position.

However, that last familiar sound strangely kept ringing in her mind and she couldn't let go of it.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 54**

# THE BUNCH THAT WANT TO IMPROVE THEIR POWER

At the training grounds of the Myuuz castle, a enraged voice echoed.

The demons gathered there were swinging weapons like spears, axes, swords. Each on their respectively decided positions were swinging their own weapon while raising their yelling. The beautiful trimmed grass trembled by the amount of wind pressure.

Among everyone that was giving their all in the training, there was an existence that was distinctively a cut above the rest.

It was Riku Barusak. While having her red hair fluttering, she was dealing with the multiple demon soldiers that were charging at her. What she was holding in her hand wasn't the halberd she would usually be using. a, what she was holding was the silver sword she had obtained when she had fought against Selestinna Bistolru. While glittering, the silver sword was lightly parrying the attacks of the demons.(TL note: いつかしか=? Master google could not provide me guidance:/ Maybe mistyped by the author? The place "a" is written is where this word is.)

Behind Riku, the amount of defeated soldiers had already formed a pile. There were only three demons that remained standing in front of her. They were tightly holding their swords, but were already stepping back. Riku snorted.

"What's the matter? A chance like this won't happen more than once."

With a provocative tone, she asked the scared demons. She lightly did a spin on her sword.

"Even though this is a chance to defeat this human in a formal way... Or could it be that you had given up on the fight from the beginning?"

"Don't dare call us cowards!!"

The demon that was at the front of the other two attacked while barking those words. In a too stupidly honest way, he tried to break through her defense face to face. Following this, the remaining two people also charged forward.

“Too weak.”

The attack closed in to Riku until the last moment. That was, until the sword of that first demon to attack was just about to reach her. In that situation the sword was only at a paper-thin of distance, Riku agilely stepped her foot to the right. Bending her body, the attack went past her. That demon, who had lost its target, was not able to immediately stop the momentum. Because of how his sword was pressed forward, his side flank had become exposed to Riku.

Moving her left hand, she got hold of the demons arm. Rather than a small grasp, the demon groaned. The sword that had been so tightly hold as if it was a treasure had easily fallen from his hand.

“First one first.”

Before that sword could fall down to the ground, Riku made her next move. Aiming for the back of this demon that was about to be the first to fall, she kicked him without hesitations. The demon was sent flying towards the two other demons that were following behind him.

“Uwaa!”

“To!”( っ と ! )

One of the demons was able to take some distance and avoid the obstacle coming at him. However, the other one couldn't do so in time. He directly received the demon that had been sent flying with his body. Receiving a demon of same physiques to him at his belly, he was squashed by the impact.

“Second, crushed.”

Riku calmly turned her eyes to the fallen demon that had bubbles flowing out of his mouth.



And then, she immediately looked at the last one. The last demon had stopped running towards her. While he was holding his sword and looking at her, it felt like he imagining a line marking Riku's attack range.

“Third guy, are you perhaps not coming?”

“...”

Being asked that by Riku, the last demon narrowed his eyes. Silently frowning his eyebrows, it seemed like he was thinking about something. From the demon's forehead, sweat was flowing down incessantly. Riku sneeringly smiled.

“If you are not coming here, then I will be coming for you.”

She gave one step forward. It was only a single and simple step. With that step, she had calmly entered within the line he had been imagining about, and started her dance in front of his eyes.

“U-uwaa!!”

All this surprise should have been because Riku's face appeared right in front of his eyes. Without having time to avoid, he miserably fell down to his back.

“With that, it is the end. ...Really pitiable.

Riku coldly declared. Without mercy, she put her silver sword next to the neck of that demon that was miserably lying sprawled at the grass. With how much Riku had closed in to him now, it would be impossible to even try to swing his sword. The demon swallowed a mouthful of saliva.

“If it is so regrettable, then go train without complaining. And then, become a soldier worthy of captain Leivein.”

“It should be “worthy of the Demon Lord”, lieutenant colonel Riku Barusak.”

From behind her, somebody spoke to her in a cold tone. Looking at the direction that voice came from, a youth wearing a long robe was standing. The youth that had clothing unfitting for the soldier's training grounds was making a sour face.

Riku faintly frowned.

"It has been a long time, staff officer Piguro. Would you have any business with me?"

While still pointing her sword at the neck of that demon soldier, Riku calmly asked. Piguro was pretty much the adjutant of the Dragon Demon Battalion. Why did somebody like him come to Myuuz castle?

"...It's obvious I have some business with you, lieutenant colonel Riku Barusak. It is about work. Follow me immediately."

Without changing his sour face, Piguro said only that and left the place in a fast pace. It was as if he didn't even want to breathe the same air Riku did. Putting the silver sword into her scabbard, she turned away from the fallen demon.

"That's all for today. Come again tomorrow."

Saying only that, she left the training grounds behind.

At the exit of the training grounds, Piguro was earnestly waiting for her. Beside him, Roppu was also waiting for her. Noticing Riku, Roppu gave her a white towel.

"Here, lieutenant colonel Riku."

"Thank you, sergeant major Roppu."

It was a white towel overflowing with a sense of cleanness. It was extremely soft and had a faint sweet fragrance. Perhaps it had just been washed. While Riku was lightly wiping her sweat, Piguro opened his mouth.

"It's an urgent matter, so I will be speaking here. Hear it carefully."

“Yes.”

Giving the towel back to Roppu, she silently waited for Piguro's words.(TL note: Actually, it only says that Riku let go of the towel... It doesn't say what she exactly did with it or where she put it... So I just guessed she gave it back to Roppu^^)

“First of all, congratulations for your promotion to lieutenant colonel. I've heard you've been promoted because of your achievements at Karkata and for the consideration of your struggles at Sherr island. From now on, may your loyalty for the [Demon Lord] be even more deepened.”

In those words, the word [Demon Lord] had been given intonation. Without saying anything, she lowered her head as if accepting it. As she did that, Riku was looking at Piguro with suspicious eyes.

“...Do you understand? Well, it doesn't matter. Today, your next task has been decided.”

“Next task, you say?”

Riku raised her head in vigor.

Two months has passed since she had come back from Sherr island. The surroundings were completely engulfed with the jovial feelings of spring and all became more green. Although she had been promoted to lieutenant colonel, there were no changes to her being affiliated with the third army, hence, she was working hard on training the soldiers of the third army.

It is not like she particularly hated the job.

The survivors of the second army lead by Edgar Zerrik had merged with the third army, making it become bigger. The soldiers that were originally from the third army already knew the strength of Riku, and so they wouldn't be discontent about her. The ones that would challenge her were pretty much only demons that desired to become stronger.

Those demons that desired for improvement, in general, also possessed great strength. There were many challengers that had nothing to say against her and only wanted to face

her to enhance their swordplay.

On the other hand, the remnants of the second army, who didn't know of Riku's strength, would raise complaints about Riku. They would speak ill behind her back and look at her with killing intent. Beating down those types while saying it was [training] was somehow very comfortable. She would smash the fangs being aimed at her and make them yield.

During this time she had been accumulating all those trainings, it seemed that Riku's strength had been gradually permeating into their mind. And so, the people that would gaze at her with signs of killing intent had decreased. Nowadays, all the deep rooted [anti-Riku faction] could do was to look at her with killing intent.

Riku would hurriedly spend her time improving in this daily life.

...However, if speaking of her intentions, there was no way she would only be worrying about her training.

Riku wanted to have military achievements for Leivein's sake. There is no way she could calmly and slowly increase her strength in a place like this.

Riku wanted to be sent to battle, even if it was for only an hour sooner. That's why Piguro's words made her heart dance.

"Where is it happening? Is it a battle filled with screams? A battle you are poured with the blood of enemies and allies? Is it a battle merciless to the point of being sad?"

"Please, don't start have your eyes sparkle, lieutenant colonel Riku Barusak. Really, strong guys that want to get stronger for random reasons are always..."

The mission you have been tasked with is to abduct a certain person."

In that instant, Riku completely lost her motivation.

Abducting wasn't a word that had much appeal to it. Riku didn't have interest in dirty jobs criminals would do.

"It's showing in your face, lieutenant colonel Barusak. Pay a bit more attention to your

expressions.”

“...Yes, I will take care, staff officer Piguro.”

“...In your voice too, lieutenant colonel Barusak. Well, you are this kind of person after all.”

While fixing his glasses, he gave a big sigh.

“If you have success in this mission, it will be possible for the Demon Lord to be ressurected in this year. However, if even in one in a thousand chance you fail, the revival of the Demon Lord will become far away. In order words, it is a extremely important mission. If you succeed, not only will you obviously receive a medal, but Charlotte-sama has also promised that you will be promoted to general without the need of a test.”

“Yes, I will work to my upmost!”

While the muscles of her back became stretched, she raised her voice.

If there was promotion involved in it, there is no reason not to accept it. She didn't like how Charlotte was connected to that, but even so, if it is for the sake of getting promoted, anything would be fine.

In order to rise to become a general, it was necessary to do a test. If it was only a practical test, she would certainly pass. However, there was also a written test. The written test was what really was the barrier for Riku. Previously, because she asked Gortoberuk, she got him to show her the written test he had done. It wasn't only tactics, but there were also mathematics, reading of long sentences and translating of the letters of the ancient era, which all would have complex symbols being used.

Without being able to answer even half, even now, she would always be desperately looking at the text books until late at night.

“Then, who am I supposed to kidnap?”

If she undertook the abduction mission, she would be able to send that pain in the ass procedure flying. It was such a magnificent occurrence to her. Riku's heart became

energetic.(TL note: リクの心は、一気に膨れ上がった= ?)

And then, she concentrated all her nerves on Piguro's words. After clearing his throat and putting an air of importance, Piguro calmly spoke.

“The princess Catherine, who is momentarily staying at the Barusak residence, at the royal capital of the Shiidoru kingdom.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 55**

# SMILE

A certain day, at the night party at the royal palace, this topic was talked about.

“Who is the most beautiful girl in this continent?”

It was a topic spoken of very often. However, it was also one that attracted interest. A certain count said the name of a priestess of the east of the continent, and there were also nobles that were doting parents and would say the name of their own daughter.

However, the curtains for this talk were lowered down before long. That is because the host of this party... Catherine Shiidoru, had immediately given her own answer. While hiding her mouth with a folding fan, she refuted, as if this was a foolish question.

“The most beautiful woman? Is there anyone other than me?”

With her fragile arms crossed, Catherine said in a composed tone.

If one were to hear this declaration, perhaps one would think of her as a conceited haughty woman. However, nobody was able to have objections about her reply. She being the one hosting this night party, being the princess that will succeed the throne or having political power, none of it mattered. It was simply that there was nothing to object. This was because everyone acknowledged the great beauty of Catherine.

Catherine Shiidoru was beautiful.

If god exists, she would be his greatest creation.

Golden eyes shining like the sunlight of summer and with smooth pink lips that would make one want to touch them. From the tip of her golden hairs to her long white legs, everything was beautiful.

Anyone that would pass by her side, even if this person was a woman, she would become



breathless.

And the beautiful girl, beautiful to the point of it being unfair, was overflowing with kindness.

Looking at each of her attributes, they were all ones fitting of the haughty royalty. Not only she had a personal attendant whose excellence was lower than nobody, but also had contact with the nobles and spiritualists. She had great tolerance with the [people of her territory]. Overflowing with kindness, she would extend her hand to the ones in necessity without hesitation.

All this was known by all the people of the Shiidoru kingdom. The kingdom's citizens, which were the possessions of her father, the king, were also her possessions. If that is so, then was there even any reason to hesitate in extending her hand to them?

If there was a starving village, she would send food to it herself, and if there was somebody with an incurable disease, she would hold his hand and give encouragement.

Catherinne, who worked for the sake of the people of the kingdom, were revered by them as [the goddess princess].

Rook Barusak also liked Catharinne.

She was more beautiful than anyone and was one of the heroines of the game. Not only would the main character be getting closer to her, but in the end, she was the only one that would make him king.

That's why Rook captured Catherinne. Speaking in accordance to the dialogue of the game, he kept triggering the next events. Until Rook's existence became from [an subject of showing kindness to] to [a target of love], it wasn't too long. Now, she had already been hiding her haughty figure and acting "dere".(TL note: Dere of tsundere. Google it if you don't know what it means ' 3' Or not)

Rook's goal was to become the king as Catherinne's legal husband.

His sister Raku, Mary, Selestinna and Charlotte would serve him as his concubines and they would live their life happily to their last days. And then, seeing off his cute children

and his loving spouses, he would die without regrets. (TL note: Scary 0.0)

Such a wonderful life.

Such a wonderful [illusion].

Recently, he became unable to imagine such tender future.

Despite how Catherinne was coming to stay at the Barusak residence for some time, his melancholy wouldn't clear up for some reason. Rook had been steadily going through Catherinne's route.

The event of Catherinne coming to the Barusak residence didn't exist at the other routes.

The following event, [Catherinne's abduction event], existed at Charlotte's, Rebecca's, Kurumi's and also Asty's routes. However, she being abducted at the Barusak residence would not happen unless Catherinne had been captured. And then, this event would become the foundation for her route.

"Rook-sama? Catherinne-sama has arrived, however... What should we do about the meal?"

While he was absorbed in his thoughts, a voice came from behind.

The one to timidly ask him was a maid. She was a maid that had been working together with Mary for a long time. However, Rook didn't know her name. Without being able to call her "girl that used to work with Mary", he was too embarrassed to ask her name after all this time. While blaming himself by how much he hadn't been paying attention at his surroundings, Rook gave a vague smile.

"Ah, yes... Go ask my father. If you can't ask him, then can you go ask Raku-ane? ...I will be going out for a moment, you see."

Rook pushed all the work to his father and elder sister.

He couldn't have his attention divided into something as worthless as the mealtime.

Without waiting for the response of the maid he didn't know the name, Rook put on his coat and jumped outside from the window. As if he was running away from the residence, he went running through the streets of the royal capital.

He had triggered Catherinne's event.

However, the other heroines had died.

And not to end there, he had killed the main character long ago.

What was all this supposed to mean? Where did he do wrong? Him having killed the main character wasn't something related to other people. While thinking on what to push the responsibility to, he noticed he was the only one responsible of that.

Him having killed the main character was of his own responsibility.

From the beginning, all that he made happen wasn't the main character doing it. By the results of his own deeds, everybody died. However, the main character's event was happening just like that. In the end, Catherinne, this goddess that had no doubts about Rook being the main character, was coming to the Barusak residence.

Rook was taken by a bad feeling.

In the game, leading an army, Leivein Adlar would come attack the royal capital. Using this opportunity, a rabbit demon of fast feet would come in.

All the rabbit demon had was speed. He wasn't particularly strong. Putting off Leivein Adlar for later, he would first save Catherinne, and then, together with her, combining the power of the two, they would defeat Leivein, the villain. With the villain running away, he would deepen his bonds with Catherinne even more. It would be a story like that.

...However, he had a bad feeling about it.

Until now, many events had happened. However, not a single one of them was leading him to the happy end. With this continuing like that, he felt that Catherinne was going to end

up dying.

Where did he do wrong?

He didn't know how many times he had kept asking this himself.

He didn't know. He didn't know anything, and didn't want to know. However, he needed to know it, so he wanted to know.

Rook kept running.

He had felt that if he ran, and kept running like that, he would be able to understand something. However, now he was feeling he wouldn't be able to understand anything. Perhaps it would have been better if he stopped now, but he didn't want to. He wanted to run away, run away; run away from everything; everything that was binding him. Why had all ended up like this?

He didn't know, didn't know. All he wanted was to run, run and run!

“..!”

He ended up stumbling at the shoulder of a person he didn't know.

With the impact, Rook noticed that he had ran as far as to the water fountain plaza of the royal capital. He went back to the reality, in this place, filled with the sound of water and the shop stalls at the surroundings giving off its own aura, where people were going back and forth. Hurriedly stopping, he lowered his head to the person he had stumbled at.

“I-I'm sorry!”

“No, I'm fine... Ah.”

This person was a girl. Because of the hood, he didn't know the length nor the color of the hair, and her appearance was out of order. Perhaps she had been through a long journey. She was wearing a worn out coat and had a long sword at her waist.(TL note: Here it says that her appearance was in order, but then, it says that she was wearing a worn out coat...)

“Um, I’m really sorry. I wasn’t looking ahead of me... Are you... Hurt anywhere?”

“...”

The girl stopped speaking.

And then, turning her back to Rook, she left the place. As if Rook was being urged by something, he grasped the girl’s arm. Why he did that he didn’t know. However, he had the feeling he couldn’t let that girl go away.

“Could you let me go?”

The arm he was grasping shook him off with a strength that couldn’t be imaginable to a girl.

And then, she glared at him enraged. Did she not like having her arm caught? Or maybe there was another reason for that. As if she was full of killing intent; no, with something that went beyond killing intent, she turned her eyes to him.

“S-sorry. It was my fault. Uh... As a apologize... If you want, I can do anything.”

Before he could think what a main character would do now, those words left his mouth.

He was truly scared of the girl in front of his eyes. The girl rubbed her thin fingers in her chin. After thinking for a brief moment, she gave a smile full of happiness.

“Thank you very much. There is one thing... I want to ask of you.”

It was a smile that seemed it would break just by touching.

That smile shook his distant memories. He couldn’t completely remember it, but he strongly felt a sense of *deja vu*.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 56**

# **.ROASTED PIG AND THE LITTLE RED HOOD**

“Eh... Is, this really for real?”

Rook thought he heard what the girl had said wrong.

It was definitely a wish that would make one imagine the other party was not sane. However, he couldn't feel falsehood in the eyes of the girl covered by the red hood. While showing a innocent smile, she looked at Rook.

“Yes, but... It's not possible really possible, right?”

The girl should have noticed it wasn't going well. Being troubled, while knitting her eyebrows, she turned away from Rook's face. Most of her face was covered in the shadow of the hood, but he could notice the girl was clenching her teeth. Her mouth twisted into a very sad smile.

If this was to continue, he might end up making this girl cry. Rook became in panic.

“N-no, it's not that. But, you... If I would say you are kind of bold, or what can I say... Ah, wait, uhh... You see, let me give you a treat. Then, we can talk with more calm.”

Rook forcibly caught the girl's arm. And then, he looked around, looking for stalls at the surroundings of the fountain.

The place located at the centre of the royal capital, the water fountain plaza, was just the right place for her to calm down. At the water fountain plaza, there would be stalls selling simple snacks and benches for one to sit. However, only today, there was only a single stall doing business. And to make it even worse, it was a stall selling junk food, which was bread with roasted pork hold between it. Until now, he had been smelling the delicious fragrance of the roasted meat, but then, he recalled the memories at Karkata.

Rook liked pork. However, those memories weren't good ones.

...But even so, he ended up saying he would give that girl a treat. He couldn't go back on his words now. Besides, his stomach was somewhat empty. It felt his stomach would growl if he became distracted even by a bit.

While sighing in his mind, he went towards the stall.

"Hello. Please, burgers for the two of us. Ah, and also two of those bottles filled with water."

After ordering that, in only a few moments, their food was prepared. The pork roasted with the charcoal was skillfully divided with a knife, and covered it with Tare sauce. And then, together with vegetables, it was put in between the fluffy-looking bread.

"Here it is."

Taking, Rook gave copper coins in exchange. Sitting down at a bench nearby, he gave the water bottle and the roasted pork burger to the girl.

"There is no need to pay for this. This is my treat."

The girl didn't say anything.

She didn't say thank you, nor anything like that. She only kept looking at the pork burger while thinking about something.

"...This is roasted pork, right?"

"Yes. Or perhaps, you don't like pork?"

"No, I just became surprised on how fated encounters like that can happen."

The girl snickered. Perhaps she remembered something interesting. By the outlook of her face, she seemed to be enjoying it very much, with her mood being to the point of one



feeling she would start humming at any moment now. It wasn't possible to see the dark mood or the brutal killing intent from a few moments ago. Rook became a little relieved.

"Thank goodness. I was thinking what I should do if you didn't like it."

Shrugging his shoulders, Rook gave a bite at the burger.

This bread that was now holding ingredients in between it had just been baked. Its surface had a crunchy feeling, and its insides were fluffy and had a sweet taste. The crunchy lettuce was a vegetable that matched well with it, and supplemented the sweet taste of the bread.

However, more than anything, it was the tasty roasted pork.

The bulky meat had a firm feeling at first. However, it was unexpectedly easy to chew through. The juicy flavor of the meat would spread to the mouth with each bite. Putting the Tare sauce at the oily meat, it perfectly fitted the meat, and besides that, it also soaked at the bread in a good way.

For him to offer her a treat was also because his stomach was empty. Because how unexpectedly tasty it was, Rook felt he would end up letting out a voice of admiration.

"...And then, that request back then... Could I ask you about it?"

While he was trembling with the deliciousness of the pork burger, Rook had been spoken to in a calm tone. Rook suddenly went back to himself. The girl that was sitting besides Rook was looking straight at him.

"Ah, yes. Uhh, if I'm not mistaken... You wanted me to help you meeting with the princess, Catherinne-sama, right?"

"Yes."

The girl muttered, somewhat looking embarrassed. a

"My father that lives at the countryside had been saved by Catherinne-sama. Since I came

to the royal capital anyway, I wanted to give her my thanks... However, it is impossible, right? For me to creep in at the royal castle or something.... Sorry, I ended up asking you too much.”

The girl strongly held the paper bag that was wrapping the bread, crumpling it. She probably knew it herself that it was something impossible. The girl became sad, as if she had already been expecting this outcome. Rook took his eyes away from the girl. To think of all things, Rook couldn't tell her at any costs that the princess in question was going at his house for a stay.

“No, don't worry about it.”

For this girl's sake, it would be better to tell her Catherine was going to stay at his house.

The girl in the red hood looked to be innocent. The oppressing killing intent was most likely because she was vigilant for still not being used to the city. After believing it to be the case, he was about to tell her Catherine was coming to stay at his house, but then, he hurriedly closed his mouth.

The princess Catherine's visit was something of absolute secrecy. It was troublesome if someone was to hear about it. To confirm there wasn't any suspicious person eavesdropping them, Rook glanced around the surroundings.

The water fountain plaza was filled with its usual liveliness. Children giving bread to the little birds and housewives having a friendly chat; youngsters eating the pork burger from the stall diligently selling the roasted pork burgers as if they had gone inside a dream. Everyone was in their own world.

...At the bench behind them, there was a boy holding a book with one hand that was nodding off. Because the hat he was wearing, it wasn't possible to confirm whether he was really sleeping. Because he was snoring, there didn't seem there were any signs that he would be able to hear them.

However, unexpected things might happen. While Rook was hesitating, the girl calmly shook her head.

“Sorry, please forget this request. ...If I were to act sneakily near the royal castle, they would end up thinking I am an assassin or something. They... Would think you are my

accomplice too.”

The girl’s big eyes started to become teary. With her shoulders trembling, it felt that at any moment, a large teardrop would flow off her eyes.

He ended up making a girl cry.

He ended up cornering the frail girl. For him to make a girl cry, he could only be the lowest man in the world. Rook had the feeling blood was leaving his face. After he hurriedly held the girl’s hands, he became able to see the girl’s eyes.

“It’s alright! I-I will do something about it!”

While strongly hoping she would stop crying, he held the girl’s hand. In contrast to her innocent looking eyes, her hands were rough. At that instant, Rook thought it was weird and felt something was out of place, but he didn’t have the time to be concerned about this now.

“This is secret, but... The princess is at my... my acquaintance’s house. I can go talk over about it with my acquaintance right now.”

“Is this true?”

“It is true! I’ve heard the princess Catherine is gentle, so she should hear it out. Tonight, I will come here with the princess. I promise you.”

Rook nodded full of energy. Then, the girl’s eyes sparkled full of expectation. While broadly smiling, she also began to hold Rook’s hands too. As the main character, he had been in contact with many girls, but seeing her smile at a distance both of their breaths overlapped, his face started to become somewhat hot.

“Is it fine for me to trust you?”

“Of course! Ah... By the way, what is your name? My name is Rook.”

“It is Anna. Anna Smith. Nice to meet you, Rook-san.”

Anna told him her name without any hesitation. The eyes that were looking at Rook were eyes that completely trusted him. If he was to break his promise after all he said, perhaps she would really start crying.

“Then, I will be brining the princess here tonight. So wait for me, Smith-san!”

Saying only that, Rook turned away from Anna.

He needed to quickly go back home and talk to Catherinne. Catherinne would always be overflowing with kindness when it is regarding about her people. If he was to tell her about Anna’s sincere feelings, she would definitely agree to sneak out of the house.

“But, she... Could she be a hidden character?”

Rook once again dreamt of his sweet dream

There wasn’t a development like this in the game, and it would be fine if he was lax about the demons for only a single day.

While believing that, he went back to his residence running in a fast pace.

—

The red hooded girl looked at Rook’s figure becoming small.

And then, after his figure vanished into the crowd of people, she let out an exhausted sigh.

“...Roppu, did you hear the conversation just now?”

With the girl indifferent muttering voice, the boy sitting at the bench behind her opened his mouth.

“Yes, I heard it, lieutenant colonel Riku.”

“I’m Anna. A girl from the countryside that came to work away from home. Don’t mistake my name.”

Riku rebuked Roppu for using her real name.

Anything was fine for using as a false name. Anna Smith was a very common name. If she was to shout “Anna-san!” in a loud voice at the water fountain plaza, one or two people would turn their faces to her. The same could be said for the surname Smith. It was so mundane it was a boring.(TL note: Anyone named Smith there? ^^)

However, exactly because it was a common name without anything special that she was able to sneak in without calling attention.

“I’m sorry for that... By the way, your request went through really easily. I thought he was going to firmly turn it down.”

“Me too. But that guy is too fond of women. Because I am a woman, he couldn’t refuse my request.”

Rook was

Each one of the women Riku had crossed swords with would declare they would fight for Rook’s sake. From the spiritualists subordinated to the Barusak to the spiritualists of the other prestigious families, and even the betraying demons, all of them would hold their sword for [Rook’s sake]. It wasn’t possible to imagine it as anything other than brainwashing.

At the time at Derufoi, when he became together with Charlotte the two of them aloneshe was able to have a glance at this characteristic.

Because he was too fond of women, he wouldn’t treat them cruelly. If they meet with each other in a catchy manner, as long as she doesn’t hurry things up too much, he would become worried about her without doubt. Thinking about that, Riku acted like that.

“But it was easy. For him to fall just with me pretending to cry...”

Simply by shedding tears, she easily got him to accept her request. It was disgraceful for her to be crying in front of Rook, but if it was for her to get him to promise bringing the princess here, she didn't mind. She would endure it and go cry some tears.

But even so, it had been unexpectedly quick. Riku was amazed by that. How a man that couldn't see through a woman's lies was the heir of the Barusak made her want to laugh to the point of holding her stomach.

“...But will he really bring the princess here?”

“Don't worry. If he breaks his promise... We can simply go with the plan we first intended to do.”

Even if Rook didn't bring the princess tonight, there weren't any problems. If he doesn't bring her here, all they needed to do was to get in the residence themselves.

“Roppu, get in contact with the other demons.”

Standing up, Riku grabbed the edge of her hood. Because of the red hood, she was able to hide her eye catching red hair. By hiding her hair, she wouldn't stand out. Riku happily smiled.

“Let's begin the welcome party for the princess.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 57**

# HATRED

The curtain of night descended.

The pleasure quarters, where soldiers and merchants that finished all their jobs of the day that would gather at, was very noisy and illuminated by the dazzling fires there. With the prostitutes calling out for customers without stopping, it was as lively as if it was broad daylight.

However, except for that place, all was dead silent. Except of the pleasure quarters, for the other places, it was the time for one to close the doors and prepare to sleep. The water fountain plaza was one or two streets away from the pleasure quarters. That's why, differently from when it is day, there weren't any people to the point of it feeling uncanny. All there was there was the moon that still had begun to become round silently shining its blue light upon the fountain.

“...He is late.”

Alone in the place, Riku muttered.

Sitting down at the edge of the fountain, bored, she waved her legs. All the preparations had been completed. All there was left was to wait for the prey to arrive.

“It's fine; I can do it.”

Riku muttered to herself.

She would perfectly complete this plan. No matter what kind of bad situation was to happen, she would be able to avoid whatever may come with her strength. In order to do that, first of all, it was necessary for her to be in the right state of mind. Giving a deep breath, she listened to the sound of water falling. With the sound of the water and the dim moonlight, it felt that all unnecessary thoughts flowed away. まるで、自分の中にスッと一本の筋が入り直したようだ。(TL note: No idea what this means...)



“Sorry, I’ve made you wait!”

It was at that moment.

Breaking the quietness, a voice resounded through the plaza.

Looking at the direction of the voice, it was possible to see Rook waving his hand. With a carefree smile, while pointing to Riku with her right hand, he was holding the hand of the girl behind him with his left hand. Without no need to guess, the girl behind him should be Catherinne. Riku put on the mask of the countryside girl that came to work in the city. Getting off the edge of the fountain, Riku waveringly kneeled.

“Ro-Rook-san, perhaps, could... Could the person behind you be...?”

Using trembling and timid voice, she put up a face of doubt. With that, Rook happily turned his head to the girl. The girl that had her hand being pulled by Rook looked at Riku with a noble smile.

“Nice to meet you, Anna-san. I am Catherinne Shiidoru.”

Catherinne extended her beautiful hand that had never known of hard work to Riku.

Catherinne was more beautiful that Riku had heard.

Even in the darkness of the night, her beauty wasn’t obscured. It looked as if she became even more beautiful. Her golden shine made one doubt whether Catherinne had stolen the shine of the sun, which had already set down.

“N-nice to meet you, princess-sama.”

Riku was about to take the princess’s hand, but then, noticing something, she quickly moved it back. Catherinne looked strangely at Riku, who was acting suspiciously.

“Did something happen?”

“N-nothing. It’s just that for the dirty hand of someone like me... To touch princess-sama’s gracious hands.”

Still acting, Riku decided to hang down her face as if in fright and speak a cookie-cutter line. Without worrying about dirtying the edge of the skirt that was adorned with a lace, Catherine crouched, and looking at Riku’s eyes, she gave her a smile.

“Both you and me has the same human blood flowing inside us. There is nothing to be worried about.”

Catherine held Riku’s hands. Her palm was as soft as cotton. Probably, that was what it would be called a [girl’s hand]. Although Riku was a girl too, her hands, which would hold her halberd or sword, were completely different.

“Th-thank you very much. Actually... There is something I would like to give to the princess-sama.”

Timidly moving her hand away from Catherine’s hand, she put her hand in a bag.

It happened at the instant Catherine and Rook leaned forward, wondering what kind of thing she wanted to give. From the shadow of the water fountain, a boy with rabbit ears came running at them.

“Princess Catherine! Prepare yourself!!”

Raising his voice as much as he could, Roppu raised his knife, aiming it at Catherine.

Because of the sudden attack, Catherine couldn’t defend herself. However, the knife didn’t reach at her body.

“What are you doing!”

Jumping in the middle of Catherine and Roppu, Rook drew his sword. With a metallic sound, Roppu’s knife was repelled. After dancing at the air, the knife fell at the pavement without accomplishing anything. Rook closing his distance from this assassin, he was about to restrain Roppu. However, jumping back, Roppu easily got away from Rook.

“Tch, I failed!”

Giving a frustrated shout, Roppu ran to a back-alley. Rook, who let Roppu get away, clicked his tongue in a low sound.

“Shit, I let him escape! Princess Catherine, Anna, wait here. I will be back soon!”

While shouting this, he went after Roppu. Without suspecting anything, he went to the back-alley Roppu had run into.

At the water fountain plaza, only Riku and Catherine remained.

“As expected of Rook-sama... For him to protect me from that demon. He is so cool.”

Catherine looked at Rook, who vanished into the back-alley with a love-struck face. It looked to be she was seeing Rook as her prince that saved her from danger. But if he really wanted to protect her, he should have went after Roppu only after having ensured Catherine went to a completely safe place.

Originally, Riku had thought that Rook would probably leave Catherine behind and go pursue the enemy, and so had made this plan. For him to really go after Roppu was to the point of making Riku want to say “thank you” to him.

“Well then, I will show you what I wanted to give you.”

After Riku quietly stood up, Catherine gave her a smile.

It seemed only after Catherine was spoken to that she had finally remembered about Riku’s existence. While still sitting down, she looked at Riku.

“Ah, that is true. What would it be?”

“Before that, first of all...”

While smiling, Riku raised her foot overhead. Then, without hesitations, she dropped her foot at the face praised to be a work of art made by god. Catherinne must have been confused by what was happening. While putting her thin fingers at her broken nose, she groaned.

“Shall we move to another place, princess-sama?”

While being grasped by her hair, Catherinne, who was fainting in agony, had a piece of cloth shoved in her mouth by Riku. Because of how Catherinne forcefully had the cloth stuffed in her mouth, and also because of the kick, it seemed that many of her teeth had broken. However, Riku didn't mind about that.

In addition to that, Riku made the proper arrangements so that Catherinne wouldn't spit the cloth. All there was left was to do was to tie up Catherinne's arms and legs in order to prevent her movement, and all would be done. Now, she couldn't move her body, nor scream for help. (TL note: Well, about “the proper arrangements”, it would actually be the literal translation of what was written there pretty much. It doesn't say what Riku did, so I can only write that :/)

“It's finished. Now, come out.”

Snapping her fingers, Riku gave the signal.

With that sound echoing at the plaza, the demons that were hiding at the shadows of the stalls and at the other streets all showed up. After them lightly lowering their head to Riku, the demons with better physique were tasked to go take care of Catherinne. As to put up resistance, Catherinne was desperately trying to move her arms and legs, but they were all useless actions. With demons not caring about Catherinne's resistance, they put her on a big box that had been specially prepared for her.

“Lieutenant colonel, we can depart at any time.”

“Good job.”

Receiving the report from the demon, Riku nodded.

If it was by Riku, she would leave Catherinne for the demons to deal with. And then, she

would go after Rook herself and cut off that face with that carefree smile.

However, it would be a problem if an obstacle to the plan would happen because she had made unnecessary actions. And besides, it would be very disregarding to Roppu, who was luring Rook away from them with the resolve to risk his life. Right now, she needed to put away her own feelings and devote herself in finishing the mission.

“Now, let’s quickly escape.”

It happened at the instant Riku and the demons started to run.

From the direction of a dimly dark street, it was possible to hear an out-of-place sound of clapping.

Riku and her demon subordinates prepared themselves for whatever was coming.

“It was really good that we kept watching after that bait.”(TL note: Bait = Rook. I couldn’t figure out how to phrase it out in a clear way...)

The figure of a man slowly appeared from the dark street.

With his silvery hair fluttering, the man was calmly showing a smile. Behind him, there were tens of spiritualists and soldiers he had brought along.

However, in contrast to that smile that seemed to show love to everything in the world, his pair of eyes were glaring at Riku in irritation.

“Th-this can’t be...”

His voice, his face, his figure. All stimulated Riku’s memories.

It was the man that would touch her hair without hesitations; the same hair that everyone despised and that even her first friend ran away from. It was the man that comforted Riku when her mother had died more than anyone would. His training was strict, but he would always give her anything she wanted.

It was the man Riku used to love, and that had trampled over her feelings. It was the man that would make her whole body twist out of hate; the man she wanted to crush his bones, steal all the happiness he had at hands, and have him taste all the despair of the world.

“It has been a long time, Riku.”

The man spoke to her in the same gentle voice he would do when she was still a child.

As if nothing had ever happened, he spilled out her own name from his mouth. Riku couldn't endure anymore. At the instant she stopped holding herself back, a vast amount of killing intent gushed forward from near her feet.

While tightly holding her sword, she glared with all her strength at that despicable man.

“Raimon Barusak.”

For how long had Riku been waiting for this moment? The killing intent that kept growing worse not only made the spiritualists Raimon had brought with him tremble, but even Riku's subordinates too.

However, Raimon Barusak, the origin of all her killing intent, didn't react to Riku's killing intent.

While showing a gentle expression, he spoke to her as if nothing had happened.

“I'm happy I could meet you again. So happy to the point of making me want to crush you with my fingers.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 58**

# THE MAN THAT WAS THE ORIGIN OF ALL THIS

The man that was the origin of all this, Raimon Barusak, looked at Riku and extended his hand to her.

“Riku, you are really a bad child. For you to be holding hands with the demons even though you were able to survive... To deal with a bad child, some spanking is necessary.”

The instant her own name left Raimon’s mouth, Riku’s heart started to beat loudly. It started to relentlessly beat as if it became out of control. Her whole body trembled. Every cell of Riku’s body each screamed to her to kill the man in front of her eyes. Riku happily smiled.

“No.”

Kill.

Cut him to death, skin him dead, skewer him to death, smash him to death, torture him to death, trample him to death, bully him to death, straggle him to death, dry him up to death, squash him to death, beat him to death, bite him to death!

No, that’s wrong. Before killing him, it was necessary to make him suffer anguish of all the three thousand worlds.(TL note: This sounds so chuuni ¬¬ The “three thousand worlds” should be something related to religion, although I don’t know which. Maybe shinto? :3)

Because of the turbulence that was going through her whole body, Riku trembled. This was the moment she had awaited since she had been throw away has arrived. She never thought the day she would become that much overwhelmed by her emotions like that would come. Riku licked her lips.

“The one that needs spanking is you... Father.”



Riku lowered her stance.

She was ready to fight. Right now, even if it is a hundred or two hundred spiritualists, she can cut them all. A sense of liberation took over Riku.

On the other hand, her demon subordinates were trembling for another reason. The head of the Barusak was about to come at them while leading about fifty spiritualists. No matter how, they couldn't imagine themselves winning this battle. Mustering up courage, one of the demons and pulled Riku's sleeve.

"Lieutenant colonel, lieutenant colonel, if we are to face this many spiritualists, even if we had multiple lives, it wouldn't be enough!"

Riku's demon subordinate whispered next to her ear.

That voice made her calm down a bit. As if she had cold water poured at her, her agitated feelings calmed down. But even so, there was no way the killing intent inside Riku had vanished. With her killing intent still coming off from her scabbard, it felt that the killing intent became sharper instead. Riku gave a sidelong glare at the subordinate.

"Are you... Intending to show your backs and run from the enemy?"

"Let's run. We have no option other than running, lieutenant colonel. Bringing the princess and regrouping with lieutenant general Adlar has the priority."

"Regrouping, yes?"

Riku murmured.

If she had let her body be controlled by her killing intent, this level of enemies would not be enough to have relevance.

However, the weapon she had at hands right now wasn't the halberd she had become familiar to fight with, but the silver sword she had borrowed from Selestinna Bistolru. She could still fight even using the sword, but it would be hard to say she would be able to

have a perfect stance with it. Since they are being lead by Raimon, then most likely each of those spiritualists waiting behind him had a power comparable to Toudo Barusak, who she had crossed swords with at Myuuz.

Raimon Barusak is a powerful foe that can't be compared to Toudo.

The last time Riku had fought with him was in a mock battle when she was a child. At that time, Riku would use her super strength that had let her even carry those huge barrels at that time. What's more, if her memory was not mistaken, Raimon would force Riku's hand back with only a single finger.

Since that time, many years had passed, and Riku's power had increased without doubt. Because Raimon became older, perhaps his power declined a bit, but even so, she could not be hopeful about that.

At least, if Riku was to fight him by herself, it would be reckless.

If she had Vrusto and the principled Asty, perhaps she would be able to win this battle. However, the ones trembling behind her, although they were those of the elite in the Demon Lord army without doubt, they weren't selected by Riku because of their strength. She needed to narrow it down to demons that looked they would be able to merge into the human society, and so, she had brought those demons that had appearances similar to humans.

If comparing to Asty's excelling combat skills, they wouldn't even reach her feet.

It wasn't possible to imagine those guys that wouldn't even against Asty winning against those people that had strength comparable to Toudo.

While Riku was thinking, Raimon made his move.

"What's the matter, Riku? Are you not fighting?"

Perhaps Raimon was out of patience. Raimon provoked Riku.

"So annoying. Do you want to fight me this much?"

Riku clicked her tongue in a low sound. Riku hated Raimon. He hated him so much to the point of just with the simple word “hate” not being enough to describe it.

However, something that took even more priority than him right now was to deliver the princess that was locked inside the box safely. If she manages to succeed in this mission, she would get to be exempted from doing that test.

She didn't have the time to worry about these worthless personal affairs such as killing Raimon Barusak.

All she needed to do was to carry the box the princess is inside and rush to Leivein, who is waiting for them outside.

Yes, if Riku was able to escape with the princess, it would be her victory.

If it was her, she would be able to run away while carrying the princess. Once she ran back to where Leivein is, all there was left to do was to go back to Taitas, the demon capital. From the royal capital to the demon capital, there was a considerable distance. Until then, they would be able to lose Raimon's pursue.

Once she succeeded in bringing the princess there, she would be able to advance one more step in her career.

“Is Riku scared?”

“Scared? You mean me?”

However, Riku did one swing with her sword in the air. Probably guessing Riku had intent to fight, the demon from just before had pulled her sleeve strongly. And then, with a tone harsher than before, he pointed his feelings of opposition.

“Lieutenant colonel, please stop! Let's run! Let's run, I say! There is no way we can win!”

“No way we can win. That's right, there is no chance of winning against them.”

Declaring that without hesitations, Riku shook off the demon's hand. While having her eyes burning with flames of hatred, she simply glared at Raimon Barusak.

“Only you don't!”

Shouting only that, Riku kicked the stone paving of the street full of strength.

She had the feeling she heard voices of the demons trying to stop her, but she didn't have the time to be worrying about that.

“You go carry that thing to the captain right now and regroup with him! I will be following you from behind!”

“Bu-but!”

“Quickly, you blockheads!”

The mission took priority over her own matters.

And so, they needed to escape with the dead weight of a princess at all costs. It was inevitable that they turned their back to Raimon. Because it is necessary to stall the spiritualists, someone with suitable strength needed to remain behind. If the one stalling easily broken through, the person won't be able to stall anything.

With that, somebody that can fight to equality against those people that have strength comparable to Toudo was to remain. There was only one person qualified for that.

...Only Riku.

The other demons were already with their hands full with running away while carrying the princess. They would definitely not be able to buy any time.

And so, Riku grasped her sword. With her stalling the spiritualists, the demons would be able to safely deliver the princess. All she needed to do was to choose the right time and pull back. Riku thought this was the best choice.

“The time is now!”

While shouting, she raised her sword to Raimon Barusak.

Of course, the sword didn't reach Raimon. As if they had been waiting for it, the small fries jumped in front of Riku. A barrier of small fries was made in front of Raimon.

“Go die already, you traitorous girl.”

While shouting, the spiritualists pointed their sword to Riku.

Riku didn't even give a glance to them. While still glaring at Raimon through the gap of the human wall, she swung her sword horizontally. The sound of the swords the spiritualists were holding being sent flying and the light sound of their bellies being torn off was possible to be heard. And as for the voices of anguish that were heard at that same moment, Riku didn't have the time to be caring about it.

“Tch, you! Keep being cocky while you can!”

“Kill her! Kill this red child.”(TL note: I'm not sure how to translate 鬼子. In the story, this word would actually literally be what that thing of a red haired child that would be born despite the parents not having red hair.)

It was possible to hear the shouts of the spiritualists. Because of those piercing angry cries, Riku thought her eardrums would stop working. With those angry cries being raised, their attacks became even more violent. A blow Riku wasn't able to completely handle grazed at Riku's cheek. Together with the sharp pain, a stream of blood flowed out.

“...”

Apparently, it seems the spiritualists weren't using those wooden swords that are generally preferred, but swords that were actually forged by craftsmen. Only by that, Riku was once again able to realize that they were really coming to kill her.

“Sorry, but I won't be that easily defeated.”

Riku looked like she was about to be engulfed by the fierce attack from the cold sword in front of her eyes. But even then, she parried it and cut the obstacle hindering her into pieces. The smell of blood that would definitely not fit this water fountain plaza was dispersing around. However, this was an odor Riku was used to smell. It felt as if she had become enveloped with the red color she liked so much.

This stink of blood felt like it was actually giving her strength.

Deeply breathing in the smell, Riku brandished her sword at the hindrances. Together with small groans, the big wall was broken through. With a gap in the wall being widen, Riku made a path of flesh. Standing ahead of there was Raimon Barusak with a carefree smile. Without even holding the sword at his waist, he looked at Riku's direction as if he was enjoying a show. However, while his face was showing a smile, similarly to Riku, his eyes had flames of hatred burning on them.

“You’ve finally come, Riku. Now, I can properly put you to rest.”

Raimon calmly moved his hand to the handle of the sword. Being bathed in the faint moonlight, the sword sticking out of the scabbard was shining in a pale light. There was clearly a great difference from the shine of a wooden sword. With this sword, he was definitely going to come at Riku with intent to kill her.

That’s why, at that time both eyes met each other again, Riku spoke these words to her father.

“Hello, I was finally able to meet you again... Father.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 59**

# THE CIRCLE DANCE OF FATHER AND DAUGHTER

Riku attacked without hesitations.

Cutting a path through the crumbled spiritualist wall, Riku kicked the pavement and leaped. In an instant, Riku entered inside Raimon's attack range. The point of the silver sword was directed to Raimon's heart.

However, things wouldn't go well like this. As if it was what would obviously happen, Raimon parried the silver sword. However, Riku didn't overlook how his face slightly twisted at the instant he defended the blow.

"What's the matter? Did it hurt?"

Raimon didn't respond.

Riku's attack was heavier than the attacks of most demons. Just by receiving that single attack, the impact went through his arm. If he was a weakling spiritualist, his bones would have ended up breaking.

"If it hurts just by defending my attacks."

Riku quickly repositioned the sword that was shook away and bent her body, aiming for Raimon's feet.

"Then obediently be killed by me."

As to break Raimon's stance, she swept her sword at his legs. Lightly jumping, Raimon defended from the silver sword. Aiming at Riku's neck which was exposed by her forward position, Raimon swung his sword down. However, he wouldn't easily take Riku's neck. Spinning her body to the other side as to give impulse, she shook Raimon's sword



upwards.

“I see... You’ve become strong, Riku. I’m not even a bit happy though.”

Raimon approached Riku once again. While he spun his sword, it looked like he was thinking of something. There was no way Riku would give Raimon time to think. By reflex, Riku attacked him head on.

“I have to thank you for the words of praise.”

Raimon defended Riku’s silver sword with his sword. However, Raimon didn’t simply receive the blow. He parried the silver sword and shifted it into an attack that looked it was going to reach Riku. Being bathed in the moonlight and giving off a blue shine, while it was mowed down the pavement, Raimon’s sword had been aimed at Riku. Obviously, having that blue sword gorge out one’s own body would not be good.

Without any changes in Riku’s expression, she stopped Raimon’s sword with the silver sword.”

“As my thanks, I will pay back with father’s death.”

“Hahaha, this would be a problem. If Riku really wants to be a good child, then how about shutting up and handing over your head?”

While both Riku and Raimon were showing smiles, they kept exchanging sword blows.

While the daughter would swing her sword with a satisfied smile that gushed forward with insanity, the father would receive the sword with a gentle smile and counter attack, swinging down his sword filled with hatred. Then, the daughter would parry and once again attack.

There was no room for the “spectators” to provide assistance.

There were spiritualists that had an arrow ready to fire, but it had been too difficult to aim. Raimon’s and Riku’s positions kept changing as if they were dancing. When they would get a good aim right at Riku’s back, Raimon would already be at the place she used to be by the time. Because their movements were too intense, if they were careless, they would end

up hitting Raimon.

But even so, there were also bold spiritualists. Drawing their own swords, they would join in the fight and rush at Riku the moment she gave them her back.

“Prepare yourself!!”

“Hindrance.”

Riku’s response about their support would be only that. Saying solely a single word, she didn’t even look at the spiritualist. Doing a horizontal cut, Riku cut a straight line at the belly of the spiritualist. Indifferently dealing with the little insect, Riku reaped the life of the reckless spiritualist that tried to attack her. And then, she once again turned her eyes to Raimon.

The spiritualists weren’t able to intervene at all. All the remaining spiritualists could do was to be at guard at the surroundings so that nobody would interfere.

“You are already getting tired, aren’t you?”

They had already crossed swords more than twenty times. Both swords clashed against each other while raising a violent sound. The swords would lock into each other, f, cr and once again clash into each other.

“This is my line... Riku.”

Raimon’s physique was better than Riku’s.

He was higher than Riku by more than one head and had a good amount of muscles.

However, Raimon was being pressured.

The little daughter was pressuring the big father. Whether it is because of the age difference, or simply because of Riku’s super strength, or maybe some other reason... With each time he defended against each of Riku’s blows filled with insanity, Raimon was definitely becoming exhausted. His breathing was getting faster bit by bit and sweat was

flowing down from his forehead.

However, Raimon didn't have the spare time to wipe his sweat. If he was to do something like that, then Riku would come jumping at this opening filled with joy.

"Father, you are full of openings."

"I'm showing those openings on purpose. I wanted to see Riku's improvements, you see."

"I see. Then, I will have yo a special

With her eyes shining, Riku held her sword tightly. While raising a thunderous sound, the sword was raised overhead from its lower position. Regardless of who was to see this, it was possible to know that this attack was going to be one that couldn't be compared to the other ones from moments ago. Raimon must have thought it would be difficult to defend from it. He immediately bent his body to the side. However, because he had to avoid the attack so suddenly, his stance was broken.

"Damn it!"

"Good bye, father."

Blood went up to Riku's head.

While being driven by the hatred, she set her aim at the displaced sword. And right at the moment she was about to have her sword go through that white neck, it happened.(TL note: I didn't really understand what exactly happened there... The translation here might not be accurate. :/)

"...Just kidding. You are too naive, Riku."

Despite having his death approaching, Raimon calmly showed a smile of victory.

Right at the time Riku was about to stop her feet by precaution, Raimon sword twisted. The sword that didn't have even a single crack despite receiving Riku's attack became flexible. As if it was a snake springing forward, the sword went towards Riku's arm.

“!”

Just like just a bit before, Riku tried to . The silver sword parried Raimon’s sword. However, she could not stop the force of the sword. Despite parrying, the sword did not stop and just like that it had twisted Riku’s dominant arm. Riku tried to muster strength to shook it off, but the blade of the sword had already bitten into the skin. In reaction, Riku twisted her face in pain.

“This is?”

“Riku didn’t know, right? My attribute.”

Raimon came close to Riku with a gentle face.

“Spiritualists can infuse their own attribute at their equipment. My attribute is earth. I can completely change the shape of things. And of course... I can also have my sword restrain Riku like that.”

And so, Raimon’s sword changed its shape.

Right now, Raimon’s sword wrapped around her arm like a handcuff. If he was to turn the shape of the sword back to normal, Riku would end up having her dominant hand cut off. Not to mention about holding a sword, but she wouldn’t be able to properly swing her halberd.

Riku clicked her tongue.

She was able to buy time. Her subordinates probably had already regrouped with Leivein by now. Now, even though all that would have been left to do was to pull back, she had been completely careless for letting something like that to happen.

“There is nowhere to run anymore. ...Now, Riku. I have something to say to you.”

Calmly and calmly Raimon approached her.

It felt as if he was taking his time to walk those few steps of distance on purpose.

“It would have been fine if I killed you with my own hands, but... Riku became this much strong. Since I have this opportunity, I will have you suicide after using you.”

With those last words, Riku was able to guess what he was talking about.

Raimon should know that Riku would never suicide. If she had the time to spare for killing herself, she would go cut off the head of spiritualists even if it is only a single more.

However... There was one method of forcing any kind of orders on someone regardless of one's own will.

“It can't be.”

Raimon calmly approached her.

The true name. If he was to speak her true name to her, her soul would be bind. No matter how much she resisted from doing whatever kind of hateful order it was, in front of the true name, she was defenseless. She would be forced to follow the orders.

“It is just what you are thinking, Riku... No.”

Raimon's smile broadened.

The muscles of Riku's back stood . If she was able to cover her ears, she would be able to not hear it. However, even if she covered her left ear, her right hand was restrained. Riku desperately was trying to think of a plan to get her out of this situation.

And while she was thinking, the distance between Raimon and her was narrowing.

And finally, Raimon spoke next to her ears as if he was whispering words of love.

“Rinkus Barusak... I command you.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 60**

# .UNEXPECTED REALITY

With pain going through the side of his head, Roppu groaned.

At the back-alley of the royal capital, the silent battle was unfolding. Running at full speed, behind Roppu, Rook was pursuing him while holding a bow. From time to time, Rook would draw an arrow and shoot it, aiming for Roppu.

Rook's accuracy rate was definitely not bad.

He received guidance from Selestinna, and so exceeded the skill of the average soldiers by far.

However, unfortunately to him, Rook was shooting while running. And so, with him without being able to properly aim most of the arrows, it was possible to avoid them. However, maybe because his ability was still very good, the arrows would often times graze at Roppu's cheeks, head and ears.

“You should give up, Rabbit demon!!”

While hearing Rook shouting behind him, Roppu kept running.

There was no demon that would stop just because someone said to them they should give up. At the risk of his life, moving his feet that, as a messenger, had been trained, he kept running away from the water fountain plaza even if it is for only a little bit more.

“You, say something, Rabbit!! Rather, be hit and drop dead already!!”

While yelling some random complaints, Rook kept shooting arrows at Roppu. Although Rook was able to keep the pursue despite not really knowing whether to focus on moving or shooting, the naivety of this tactic made Roppu end up being surprised.

There were times the objectives in the strategies of lieutenant colonel he served were off.

However, as expected, there wouldn't be things as stupid as that in those plans.

Then, unconsciously...

"...Really, you are completely different than your elder sister."

Roppu ended up muttering.

Those words that leaked out of his mouth echoed at the dark back-alley so loudly to the point of it being unnatural.

However, he didn't have the spare time to be worrying about that. Continuing to run, by the time Roppu turned into corner, he suddenly noticed that there were no more arrows being shot at him. Rather, when he turned back, he couldn't see Rook's figure anywhere.

"This... Did I bait him far enough?"

For Rook to leave him was the opposite of the point of his mission.

While thinking he might have planned an ambush, Roppu discretely peeked from the edge of the corner of the back-alley.

After doing that, he saw Rook was still there. With about ten steps away from Roppu, he was standing there dumbfounded without even having an arrow prepared at his bow. With how he was in some kind of absentminded state, it looked as if his soul had left his body.

"..."

He kept standing there without looking like he was going to go after Roppu, and he also wasn't showing signs that he was going to pull back.

Without shooting any arrows, he kept standing at the same place. Even after a few minutes passing, he absolutely didn't do even the slight movement. Because of how weird Rook was acting, Roppu walked up to a distance where the arrows wouldn't necessarily hit him easily.



“Hey.”

Lifelessly, Rook finally opened his mouth.

Roppu became on guard, but Rook wasn't in a state to be caring about something like that. Rather, perhaps he might have forgot Roppu was the enemy.

With a mood that felt as if something had collapsed hanging in the air, somewhat hesitantly, Rook asked Roppu.

“...When you said elder sister... Who would you be talking about?”

—

“Shut up, you animal!”

Drowning out the next words with that shout, with all her strength, Riku shook off her arm from the restraint.

Riku's right arm was restrained by the sword Raimon had transformed into a handcuff.

In order words, if she were to move even a bit, the blade of the sword would bite into her arm, and perhaps it would even cut it off. As to be expected, in that instant, Raimon's sword cut into Riku's right arm. The sword that was sharp even when transformed into a handcuff brutally cut Riku's arm off.

“I”

From the cut, fresh blood gushed out exactly like the water fountain behind her.

At the next instant, an intense pain that even felt it would make her brain go numb went

through her arm. During her life, Riku had suffered many injuries, but as to be expected, the pain of having her arm amputated went beyond her imagination. Together with the pain, a chill assaulted her because of the great amount of blood lost. Her legs started to falter. However, if she was to fall down at a place like this, there wouldn't be any meaning to her sacrificing her arm.

While clenching her teeth, she took distance from Raimon.

“As if I would follow the commands of someone like you!”

Together with her rough breathing, those words were spit out.

A pool of blood was spreading at the surface of the pavement. In that pool, Riku's right arm and silver sword were lying there.

She could only honestly nod that losing her dominant arm was regrettable. However, more than that, she wouldn't be able to forgive herself if she followed the words of the man in front of her eyes and bared her fangs to Leivein.

The true name binds the soul.

Those words were definite and could not be resisted against.

“...You are foolish, Riku.”

Raimon snorted at Riku.

“Do you want to take the spiritualists down so much to the point of sacrificing your arm? The defeat of the demons had already been decided since the old days.”

Making his blood covered sword go back to normal, he once again started to approach Riku.

“Who knows? Is it really so?”

Riku tried to seem strong as much as she could.

For the distance Raimon was approaching her, she was calmly stepping back. While covering what was left from her right arm with her left hand, she waited for the opportunity to escape.

She must have bought enough time for her subordinates to pull back. Soon, this place was going to become crowded with humans. It was annoying, but she could not keep fighting anymore.

...And at the same time, she wasn't able to imagine herself safely retreating.

"I might have a hidden trump."

Riku bluffed.

Because of her severe bleeding, her view started to blurry.

Because of the pain, she felt her consciousness was becoming distant. Her feet started to feel numb. Even though all that happened was only having one arm being cut off, Riku became like that. How miserable; why was herself so weak? However, except for that, there was no other way to avoid the true name.

Riku was not going to point her blade to Leivein because of the binding of such a thing as unreasonable as the true name. That, even if she were to die.

If that was so, then perhaps it would be better for her to do a suicidal attack as her last struggle. Perhaps it would still be possible for her to fight back by biting into his throat.

If she lose her arms, she would kick him to death.

If she had her legs stolen, she would bite him to death.

If her teeth were broken, then she would use her body weight and press him down to death.

Using her body, she would kill the enemy in front of her eyes.

This was Riku's single remaining means of survival right now.

"If that is the case, Rinkus Barusak."

However, her hope quickly crumbled.

Raimon spoke Riku's true name in a loud voice to the point of it echoing through the plaza.

"Then, annihilate the demons and kill yourself after that."

"Sorry, but this is something that one can't do."

A comfortable and strong voice went inside Riku's ears.

His rough hand was gently put at her shoulder. And at instant, all coldness was cleared away and a feeling of warmth spread from her shoulders to her whole body.

What was in front of Riku protecting her was a dragon wing of deep dark color.

Already half-knowing who it was by seeing the dragon wings, Riku eyes became wide-open. Although she opened her mouth to speak, because of how surprised she was, she

couldn't utter a single word.

Raimon was not able to hide his surprise over the appearance of that demon.

“...What are you talking about?”

Raimon spoke in a tone that slightly bore perplexity.

He had definitely ordered Riku to kill the demons by using her true name. Those words had definitely reached Riku's ears. However, there were no signs of Riku acting like she would attack the demon.

“It's simple, Raimon Barusak.”

While spreading his black dragon wings, the demon laughed in triumph. Following that, it was Riku's subordinates and demons from the Dragon Demon Division appearing at the plaza one after another. Each of them, with the weapons they specialized at, were glaring not at Riku, but at Raimon and the other spiritualists.

“It is because Riku is my subordinate.”

Leivein drew his rough sword.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 61**

# 10年越しの言葉

Leivein's sword was the exact opposite of Riku's silver sword.

In contrast to the straight silver sword, Leivein's blade was very curved. It's weight couldn't be compared to the slim and smooth to use silver sword.

With Leiven's great sword, rather than piercing the enemy, it would be slaughtering. With him being able to barely lift the sword with a single hand, if it was only a normal human, the human would just narrowly be able to hold it with both hands.

However, without showing any reactions to the weight of the great sword, he drew it.

“Let's go, Raimon Barusak.”

Whether he would agree with these words or not, Leivein approached Raimon in a flash.

His speed was just like one of an arrow that had been shot. Just with a single jump, dust arose, and his sword got in range of Raimon's neck.

“Hmpth.”

However, there was no way Raimon would have his head so easily cut off.

With his sword being molded as if it had been given will of his own, it became like an armor, wrapping around Raimon. The sword that had its shape changed had both sturdiness and the sharpness to cut off a hand. Therefore, it easily deflected Leivein's attack. The sword that had blocked Leivein's attack instantly changed its form into a whip-like sword, and with it being aimed at Leivein's arm, it moved towards him, looking forward to twine around it like a snake.

While taking distance from Raimon, Leivein calmly swung his great sword. While he was defending from Raimon's attacks, it felt like Leivein was waiting for an opportunity to get

close to him

“...You don't understand, do you? Demon.”

Raimon glared at Leivein's actions.

Although Raimon had a faint smile on his face, deep inside, his heart had become cold.

Mere demons that even having them as slaves would be sickening.

In addition to that, even if it was just for using it in their argument, he had called Riku his subordinate, and even seemed to treasure her to the point of coming to save her from this predicament. To Raimon, even if Riku's super strength had actually been of use to them, for the demons to bring her up to the point of her becoming a colonel was something difficult to believe.

At any rate, the demons shouldn't feel any generosity to a domesticated human like Riku.

“Don't demons have any pride?”

“Pride? We obviously have it.”

Leivein answered back as if that was a worthless question.

“As a soldier of the Demon Lord army, we fight for the Demon Lord's ideals. That is the pride of the Demon Lord army.”

If it would be of use to the Demon Lord army, Leivein would accept anything, even if it is a human. Even if the human had the blood of one of the spiritualist families, this would not change.

If Riku didn't produce any results, then perhaps he would have dealt with her, considering his expectations only miscalculations. However, as he had expected, Riku was sprinting through the way to success. Not only she had surpassed the demons of the generation when she had been recruited, but also had surpassed a great majority of the demons, being able to ascend to the rank of colonel.



“I have not a single regret for picking up Riku.”

Leivein declared. In his blue eyes, there were no signs of hesitation. Seeing Leivein acting like that, Raimon snorted.

“Is that so... This is something I can't understand.”

Although he had said that, at the back of his mind, Raimon was finally able to clear up what he wanted to.

Recently, the rumor of the [red devil] began spreading through the public.

He wondered why spiritualists that had long military service couldn't oppose some little girl-like demon using a halberd. It didn't take much time before Raimon could reach into a conclusion. The age, gender, color of hair, and also the weapon she used: each and all of them coincided with the little girl he had thrown away.

However, he couldn't understand why would the demons use her.

The demons Raimon knew about held a very stern pride.

They believed themselves there was nothing that they couldn't defeat with their own power, and they clearly would look down on humans. They possessed a great strength that was not to be compared to that of the weak humans, and were prideful of their life span, which was not to be compared to the humans who possessed only fifty years of life.

That's why there was no way they would be so generous as to accept someone of the race of the enemy they were supposed to look down on. Therefore, until Raimon saw Riku with his own eyes, he could only be half-convinced whether the rumored person really was Riku.

But now he reached at an understanding, There was no reason to be doubtful about it anymore. Without stopping to attack Leivein, Raimon said.

“All I understood from that is that you are simply dogs of the Demon Lord army.”

Raimon's mutterings didn't hold any kind of emotion.

There were no feelings of hatred to the demons or happiness in being able to slaughter a demon. His voice gave Leivein a bad feeling.

"You... Have you not pledged your loyalty to your king?"

While handling the attacks without resting even for a moment, Leivein spoke of his doubts.

"Of course I pledged my loyalty. Well, but I don't really have the time to be discussing about that with a demon."

Raimon put his strength in the sword. A pale light shone from the sharp point of the blade to the handle. And then, when the shine of the light reached the handle, the sword split into two like a flower blooming.

"I need to have this demon killed once for all and give my punishment to Riku."

—

The situation at the water fountain plaza was that of a chaotic fight of blood flying around.

Near its center, Leivein Adlar and Raimon Barusak were having each other restrained while the exceptional demon soldiers and skilled spiritualists at the surroundings were competing with their swords.

The only fortunate thing about that was that there were no citizens that noticed this turmoil. With the great noise of the main street that was one street away, all the sound of the water fountain plaza was drowned out.

But even so, people that had sensibility to killing intent would be able to notice all this.

Even if Riku ran to a back-alley away from the plaza, she was able to clearly feel that massive killing intent. Slowing down her speed, she ended up turning her head to the direction of the plaza.

“Please, don’t waste time, colonel Riku Barusak.”

With how Riku was acting, Piguro Obis adviced Riku in an exhausted manner.

Along with Piguro, Riku ran through the back-alley that nobody. While stanching her cut arm in a simple way, she earnestly moved her feet towards the outside of the royal capital.

Of course, Riku wanted to fight too. Even though she had lost her dominant arm, she still had her left hand remaining. She still had the sword she was using, which was lying at the ground at that time. She could swing her sword even with her left hand. Even though it isn’t her dominant hand, she was still capable enough of fighting. If she worked together with Leivein, they could perhaps defeat even someone like Raimon.

But there was a reason why Riku was distancing herself from the plaza despite all that.

“It’s just like I said before. You have already finished your mission. It’s important for you to escape from the royal capital.”

“But... Staff officer Piguro.”

“In your current state, you would only be a hindrance to Leivein Adlar.”

Piguro declared.

A hindrance to Leivein. In the present situation, except for these words, there was nothing that would make Riku obey.

Not only did she lose her dominant arm, but the enemy knew of Riku’s true name. If the enemy used this to their own favor, it would be tremendous.

Unless the targeted person was directly confronted, the true name wouldn’t show effect.

For example, if Piguro, who was beside Riku, was to say something such as [Rinkus Barusak, kill yourself], she would probably stab herself with the sword she was holding now.

However, if Raimon, who was now at the water fountain plaza, was to say the same things, there wouldn't be any effects. If the target wasn't within a certain range, the true name's binding power would not have any effects.

It was possible to explain this theory even to Riku.

In simple words, the reason for this was simply that [the true name didn't reach to Riku's ears].

However... This last time's case, the conditions for it to work were fulfilled.

However, for some reason, the binding effect of the true name didn't show up. This was something Riku was wondering about.

"Either way, why... Why did the true name not work?"

Piguro breathed out in surprise to Riku's mutter.

From Riku's perspective of looking at the side of Piguro's face, it somewhat felt like it overlapped with Vrusto's for when he would complain about him babysitting her.

"You, did you forget?"

"Forget, you say?"

"Haa... Until now, how many times have someone used your [true name] on you?"

Being questioned back by Piguro, Riku started to reflect about it.

From what she could remember, considering this time's case, there were only two times it happened.

Even if one was to live in the same house of another person, it would be very rare for them to know the true names of each other. Rather, except for one's own biological parents and for one's one in a lifetime spouse, there was no reason for have other people know of one's own true name.

In fact, the only ones that knew of Riku's name were pretty much Raimon and Leivein.

"If not counting today's case in, there was only a single time."

"Yes. ...Then, you should know, right? What did Leivein said to you at that time?"

Riku went back to the memories distant in the past.

Some parts of her memories of that time were blurry, but even so, she could clearly remember her talk with Leivein at that time.

At the port city of Perikka, Leivein cut down some filthy slave merchants.

Without even wiping away the spilled blood, he turned his head to her while still holding his sword. Looking at Riku with his blue eyes that were mismatching to his fierce look, he said those words.

"[If I leave you alone like this, you will end up getting caught by the friends of those fellows lying there]... It was this."

"No, after that."

Being inquired by Piguro, Riku frowned her eyebrows.

Leivein lifted Riku up by her nape almost as if he was twist her neck. Riku had the feeling that she had her head filled with fear of having to tell her true name at that time. However, after looking at those blue eyes, strangely, her fear had lessened.

“[Since you are going to die anyway, follow me to my place. As long as you have this life that I have saved, use your power for the Demon Lord army and die for its sake.]...?”

For the Riku of that time, those words were like a death sentence, and they also were what saved Riku.

If it wasn't for those words, then for how long would she be wandering in that hell? Without doubt, she would either end up dying of hunger, or maybe being caught by a slave trader and sold.

In either of those, there was no bright future.

Hearing Riku's answer, Piguro fixed his glasses.

“That's correct. That's exactly it. This is the first time Leivein had ordered you something by using your true name, and also the last.”

Hearing Piguro's answer, Riku became unable to say anything.

“In other words, from the beginning... Captain Leivein had used the true name binding to have me keep fighting for the sake of the Demon Lord army?”

“If it wasn't for that, I would have killed you, you see. If you were a spy of the Barusak family or something, it would lead to losses to the Demon Lord army, and besides...”

After speaking all this up to that point, Piguro stopped his feet.

And at about the same time he did that, Riku also stopped her feet. It didn't feel like killing intent, but she felt the presence of something coming near them. There was no hostility. However, she felt a bad feeling that made her spine tremble. Riku held the silver sword covered in blood with her left hand.

“Colonel. Don't lower your guard.”

Piguro also slowly moved his hand to the sword at his waist.

And then, the two glared at the depths of the back-alley ahead of them. The shadow standing there was slowly approaching, and finally the figure of the shadow that was falteringly walking to them became clear.

“Eh?”

The silver haired boy that could only be said to be handsome was acting as if he had suffered a considerable blow. The instant he saw Riku, the bow he was holding at his hand fell down.

And then, the boy spoke the words he hadn't spoken for these ten years.

“Riku...ane?”

The elder sister had once again met with the silver haired boy.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 62**



# SISTER AND BROTHER

The silver boy was not wary of Riku. Without holding any weapon, he defenselessly approached her.

Riku thought that he would be looking at her with a look of disdain just like Raimon Barusak and Toudo Barusak. However, it didn't seem that Rook held her in contempt.

“Riku-ane... Such a thing, how?”

Rook's voice was very husky. The husky voice was filled with sorrow, and his handsome face was twisted in surprise. His eyes became as much wide-opened as possible, and his mouth became opened into a circle in a stupid way. As far as she could understand from seeing Rook acting like that, it felt as if he couldn't comprehend the reality of Riku being alive.

Although he hadn't been told about this by Raimon, it was clearly a different reaction to Toudo Barusak, who adapted to the reality in front of his eyes immediately.

There was also another point other than his expression that was weird from Riku's perspective.

If Riku hadn't heard wrong, right now, she had been called [Riku-ane]. In other words, Rook recognized Riku not as [Anna], but properly like his [elder sister]. What meaning did this hold? The reason was clear even without thinking.

Looking at Rook, Riku declared, spitting those words out of her mouth.

“Ane? Can it be... that you really still think of yourself as my brother?”

Together with those words, she directed to him her hatred and killing intent without hiding any of it. But even so, Rook's face didn't change. Rather, it became more puzzled about it. With his expression that seemed to be asking her why was she directing killing intent to him, something snapped inside Riku.

“Yes, if you are not answering, then I will change my way of asking. Rook Barusak... How do you have the nerve to call me your [sister]?”

“Eh... But, isn't... Raku-ane my elder sister?”

Rook's voice was trembling, but even so, he declared that.

With those words, he crossed Riku's limit. Rook's expression, tone of voice, behavior: all of it made Riku's feelings stir up. While clenching her teeth and wielding her silver sword, she turned her eyes to Piguro.

“Staff officer Piguro, I will be killing this one... No, I will be capturing it.”

Riku licked her lips.

All she had been supposed to do was to entrust the rest to Leivein and escape from the royal capital. Riku was extremely frustrated about that. This time, she had become a hindrance to Leivein, and could only run away. Until now, all this frustration was being vented in she tightly clenching her fist. However, she couldn't have imagined that in such unexpected place a present would fall on her hands.

Riku couldn't endure that welling up feeling of excitement. A feeling that would be like she just having her stomach empty because she was not able to get to full herself with a gorgeous dinner, but then, receiving an extra-large dessert; a feeling of that sort was controlling Riku.

“Capture? Are you planning on catching him alive?”

“Of course, in other to make it easier to carry, I can cut off the hands and feet.”

Inside Riku's head, she had already started to think about methods to capture Rook.

For instance, the thought of cutting his hands and feet and taking him home.

And after that, she would spend her time enjoying herself. She would squash his eyes, block his nose and destroy his eardrums. Because his mouth seemed to be an annoying one, it would be nice to have his throat slit, although with that, she would end up not being able to hear the pleasant screams of suffering. That's why perhaps it would be better to not steal his voice until his last moments.

"Hm?"

At that instant, Riku noticed that Rook had muttered something.

While slightly trembling, Rook muttered something to himself as if he wanted to self-confirm it. Rook's blank eyes felt as if they weren't looking at her, but at somewhere else.

Perhaps Rook was pretending he had lost his sanity and was contacting with someone hidden somewhere. Riku strained her ears and tried to listen to what he was saying, but she was completely unable to understand what it was about.

".... This must be the world of the sequel that was released after I died. Yes, it must be it. And there, Riku-ane would become the enemy. Having a heroine being an enemy is a very common development, yes. It must be it. That's why, it is not my fault..."

Riku frowned her eyebrows at Rook's mutterings.

Him, who was standing right in front of Riku was breathing somewhat roughly. Either way, him saying he had died, or that something was a development that happened often were things she didn't understand the meaning.

All she was able to understand was that Rook wanted to convince himself that [it wasn't his fault].

"...Rook Barusak."

"Ri-Riku-ane! You were alive!!"

After Riku called out for him in a low voice, Rook answered back in a way that looked as if her previous words were repelled.

And then, as if he was welcoming Riku, he extended both of his hands. The manner he came to her with his hands extended while even having his voice trembling was that either if this would be something considered comical, or if it would be considered strange, he was definitely not sane.

“At the time when Riku-ane fell down, I thought about saving you, but... I’m sorry. I was not able to reach out my hand to you. Besides, father was even holding you by your nape... I-it was impossible to me!”

While having his eyes bulged out, he spoke out those words.

“I didn’t know Riku-ane was with the Demon Lord army, but it is really great you are still alive. It’s really, really great. That’s why, let’s go home together. You don’t need to suffer anymore by working at the Demon Lord army. I will somehow convince father!!”

“Are you convincing father?”

“That’s right. I will convince father, and then we can all live together in peace!”

Riku was holding out not to laugh at the too good to be true words Rook was spouting. But then, he ended up spilling up those last few words. Without being able to hold herself back, she ended up laughing in a loud voice that echoed through the back alley. While holding her stomach while still having her sword at hands, and even a few tears appeared because of the laughing.

“Aha, ahahahahaha!! Hey, are you planning you killing me by having me laugh?”

“Wh-what are you talking...”

“It’s just comical. Why do girls wager their tails to a guy like this?”

At the back of Riku’s mind, the images of the face of the girls she had confronted until now surfaced.

The little girl that held her sword for Rook’s sake while falteringly speaking.

The spy that had even betrayed the Demon Lord army and lent her strength to Rook.

The eccentric maid that believed Rook would be the one to guide the Barusak household.

And the provisory demon lord that wagered her tail after exchanging only two or three words with him.

The Rook those girls portrayed was someone full of compassion that would be the one to lead people to the future. He was gentler than anyone, was blessed with an exceptional talent, and looked for a solution for the peace with the demons, who were reproached by everyone.

If completely believing how those girls had portrayed Rook, he would be someone that would have given a favorable impression.

However, from all Riku could see... She couldn't imagine Rook as someone fascinating.

His eyes were bulging out and his words were trembled. He wanted to run away from the reality of him had leaving Riku to die, and by some unknown logic, he tried to justify himself.

"You are really empty. You can't even reach at the feet of captain Leivein."

Except for Rook's only good point, which was his handsome face that looked as if it had been made by god which was unsightly stiff at the moment, there were absolutely no other points that one could be attracted to. All that battalion of females that had fallen for Rook until now must have very bad eyes for men. Either that, or that he was using some kind of love potion smoke on them.

"Empty... Colonel Riku, isn't this someone very similar to you?"

"...Did you say something, staff officer?"

"No, nothing. If you are going to take care of this, then please do it fast. We don't have time."

Muttering only that, he crossed his arms and said nothing else. This was as if he was expressing that he would leave the rest to Riku to deal with.

Muttering “understood” in a small voice, she unsheathed the silver sword. Before she could hear the sound of the scabbard falling down, Riku had already kicked the ground. In an instant, she jumped right to the front of Rook’s eyes and nose, and full of strength, she swung down her sword. However, even if Rook had declined, he was still the next head of the Barusak house. Rook hurriedly bent his body, and all that happened was only having the sword grazing at his cheek. (TL note: I guess Riku was holding it while it was still at the scabbard.)

“Ca-calm down, Riku-ane!!”

With his voice trembling, Rook spoke.

However, there was no way Riku would stop her attacks. He didn’t draw his sword, and also didn’t show any signs he would use his bow. All he did was saying unreasonable words one after another while barely avoiding Riku’s attacks. It wasn’t even a defensive battle, but only stupid actions.

“..Riku-ane, please hear me out!!”

“Shut up.”

In the end, Riku felt she might end up killing him.

This wicked thought crossed through her mind. This feeling also was reflected in her sword fighting. The point of the sword that was being aimed for Rook’s shoulder or feet was now being aimed to his neck. Without being able to react to the attack that was suddenly aimed at the neck, he jumped back. While dodging the attacks by jumping back, he took distance from Riku.

“Riku-ane, why... Why must this happen... This... Ah..!”

His eyes that were looking at Riku’s face a few moments ago finally became fixed at the sword Riku was holding.

Rook's eyes that trembled in confusion started to show signs of anger. The reason for that was not something difficult to notice. While happily smiling, Riku lightly swung the sword in the air.

"Could it be that this sword seems familiar to you?"

The silver sword Riku was using used to be Selestinna Bistolru's sword.

Selestinna was someone that couldn't really be considered acquaintances to Riku, and was a small fry girl that Riku had buried before Selestinna could notice she was Riku Barusak. Riku remembered that despite she being a small fry, she was the head that leaded one of the spiritualist families, and was Rook's childhood friend.

"Ri-riku-ane... Thi-this. Why.. Do you have this?"

Rook's face started to change.

His face was still in the same perplexed way, but signs of anger started to become more apparent. That was exactly the face Riku had been wishing for. There was no meaning to defeating an opponent that wouldn't resist and finishing it by torturing him later. If she didn't completely repel all of his attacks and defeat him after that, she wouldn't be able to immerse herself in feeling superior.

That's why Riku decided to increase Rook's anger even more.

"Ah... It was the sword some spiritualist girl that was fighting at Myuuz was using. After she died, I picked it up. It must really be an honor to her for me to be using this sword. The previous owner was really weak. I had easily cut her head off in just a few seconds."

"Cut... her head?"

The instant Riku said those words, Rook drew his sword.

Rook behavior of a few moments ago completely changed, and he glared at Riku with a violent gaze. Because of Rook's anger, it felt as if the air started to tremble.

“Selestinna-chan... How dare you have killed her!!!”

That roar made the back-alley tremble.

While glaring at Riku as if he was about to get revenge for the death of his parents, he charged at her maddened. Riku trembled at the blow that didn't have even a slight of hesitation. Of course, it wasn't because of fear. The feeling that was welling up in her was delight. With the joy whirling inside her body, her trembling increased, and her mind started to shout at her, saying to eliminate the enemy in front of her eyes.

Wielding her sword and preparing herself to meet the enemy, Riku said those provocative words.

“Stupid. The one that killed Selestinna Bistolru was you... Rook Barusak.”



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 63**

# REPEAT

“Uoooooh!”

While raising a war cry, Rook put the strength of his whole body in the blow.

He had the impression that Riku had muttered something, but his ears could not hear anything. In his eyes, nothing but the girl with a devilish smile were reflected.

The one in front of his eyes wasn't his elder sister, but the enemy of Selestinna. The red haired demon. Moreover, as if it wasn't enough for her to say bad things about Selestinna, she was now holding Selestinna's silver sword with the same hands that killed her.

He couldn't forgive her.

He would definitely not forgive her.

Rather, there was no way he could forgive her.

“Dieeeeee!!”

Letting his anger take control his body, Rook swung his sword down.

Rook had considerable confidence in his sword. He was able to become the champion of the spiritualist tournament, and he was able to defeat the man that was praised of being the greatest fencer in only a light swing with his sword. That's why it was obvious he would be able to kill the demon that was in front of his eyes. Riku received Rook's prided blow that could even break a boulder, and then she crumbled without being able to even raise a groan.

“Wha!?”

...Or so it was supposed to happen.

“You are too slow.”

The instant Rook's sword was about to hit Riku's shoulder, Riku moved her body sideways with a half-step. Obviously, Rook's attack didn't hit Riku. The sound of the sword cutting through the air reached Rook's ears.

“Such a thing!? Impossible!!”

Rook was astonished.

This last attack was definitely at a trajectory that would have hit her. Besides, it wasn't at a distance that one could evade it with just agility. Despite that, Riku evaded the attack without any agitation or difficulty.

No matter how much blood had flowed into his head, he at least was able to notice that his attack had been seen through. Rook clicked his tongue strongly. From his forehead, a strand of sweat was flowing down. Looking at Rook's behavior, Riku snorted as if she was taking him for a fool.

“What is it? Is this your all?”

“Tch, you just got lucky right now!! It's obvious that you just got lucky!!”

Rook was shouting with all his strength. He distanced himself from Riku by one step and swung up his sword with all his strength. Considering the length of the sword, this time, the sword was going to cut through her belly up to her torso. While picturing the scene of his perfect victory, Rook swung his sword.

“...Hey, are you properly aiming?”

However, the result was the same.

Riku swiftly dodged Rook's sword. Moreover, there were absolutely no signs of anxiety in her face. No matter how many times Rook swung his sword, the results were nothing but

the same ones. As if she had been dancing a dance, Riku kept continuously dodging the attacks.

“Shit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hiiiiit!!”

No matter how many times he swung it down, no matter how many times he swung it up, and no matter how many times he swung it sideways, to the point of it being sad, the result didn't change. Riku dodged with a scornful smile as if all this was fun.

However, Rook was not able to come up with other ways to attack other than those. Leaving his body to his emotions, he kept recklessly doing the same attacks which he had already seen the results of. While Rook had been keeping this up, something inside him started to change. The hatred of Selestinna's death and the anger of having the attacks he had done seriously continuously being dodged welled up. And at the same time, a fear unknown to him that was deep inside once again started to sprout.

During when Rook went from trying to convince Riku to fighting her, he started to forget something due to his boiling hatred and anger.

Before the fight began... At the start, Rook had been trembling in fear.

Rook remembered the day he left Riku Barusak to her death.

This was an old memory very distant in the past of when Rook was four years old. It wasn't unreasonable for one to forget things of when one used to be only four years old. However, despite how he remembered about the game memories of his previous world, why couldn't he remember that unforgettable incident until this instant?

He couldn't understand the reason for that.

However, Rook vividly remembered when he and Riku parted ways.

The figure of the girl that had been thrust away by Raimon's hand, the girl's tears falling from her big eyes and the light in those eyes fading away. As if they were seeking for something, those extended hands grasped the air, and she fell down in the sea, being engulfed by it.

Without him even running to the cliff as he wanted to try save her, or ever thinking of sparing her life, all Rook did was to comply to his father's will.

For capturing the demon intelligence operative and the Demon Lord's sister, Raimon Barusak would become an hindrance. However, on the other hand, in order to capture Catherinne and Selestinna, Raimon would become an indispensable existence. If he was going to aim for the harem route, it was necessary for him to keep following his orders and silently wait for the opportunities.

At least, there was no way he could oppose Raimon when he was still only four years old.

While saying that, Rook kept fooling himself. However, those things were simply things that were convenient for him to say. His true feelings back then were of gladness for having someone sparing him of the trouble for that useless and not so cute heroine. She was by far not really cute, and compared to the other ones, Rook didn't have interest in that girl that wouldn't bring him any advantages.

That's why he threw her away like a toy he didn't need. The place she was thrown away wasn't the trash bin, but a raging sea, and the one that went his way to throw her away was his father, and not himself.

"It is not my fault."

If she was to survive from that... It would be natural to imagine that she would want revenge on the spiritualists, including Raimon. She would hate Rook, who was living a carefree life; it was possible to understand her feelings of wanting to kill him.

Probably, if Rook hadn't left her to her death, perhaps Riku wouldn't become like this. Perhaps things would proceed just like the game. Perhaps he would have been able to have Selestinna smiling beside him right now.

"But, it's not my fault!"

But even so, rather than recognizing his own disgrace, it was easier for Rook to think of all this as the story of a newly made game.

That's why he tried to give a warm reception to Riku. Thinking that it wasn't his fault, but

believing that it was something about the development to the game was much more easier to do.

...However, Rook was scared. The grudge of being left to die. From whichever angle one was to see her, it was impossible to see Riku as nothing but as an [avenger] that came to kill Rook.

The detestable red hair that stood out in the darkness of night, the spilled blood as her makeup, and both of her eyes fierily shining like those of a beast. And besides that, despite not having her right arm, there were absolutely no gaps in her fighting stance. Moreover, although Rook had been desperately shouting, during all this time, she had been clashing into him a vicious hatred that looked as if it would engulf him. The way she could sneer at him even under this condition made him so scared he couldn't endure.

Rook was so scared of Riku, but so scared that he couldn't bear.

He was going to be killed. The more his sword was avoided, the more this fear intensified, and the future of himself falling to the ground while coughing blood started to dazzle his mind. And so, he was scared. A fear that felt like a darkness that gradually engulfed his body started to dominate him.

“Let me kill you already, damn it! You demon!”

“...I see, you only amounted to this much.”

This was the instant his fear had won over the anger of Selestinna's death.

The insanity that used to be showing on Riku's eyes vanished like a wave of the sea drawing back. Before Rook could react to Riku's change, he received a strong hit at his stomach. With a strike that exceeded Rook's attacks, she hit him at the stomach with her left elbow.

“Guha!”(ぐはっ！)

“You are full of openings.”

While muttering “Was I overthinking?”, Riku gave a roundhouse kick on Rook, who had

been crouching because of the pain at his stomach. He wasn't able to avoid it, and also didn't have the time to protect himself from it. With a speed as fast as a whip, Riku's leg convincingly hit his flank.

“Ouch!!”(痛いっ)

Rook's body was sent into the air with the attack. He violently hit the wall and fell to the ground. While groaning in pain, Rook squatted at the road that had been dyed in blood. Rook curled up as if he was waiting for the next attack.

He had enough of pain. That's why he wanted the pain to lessen even if by only a bit. Curling up his body while shutting his ears, he shut himself in his own world.

“...”

Seeing Rook acting like this, Riku gave him a look that was as cold as ice.

Her intense gaze was to the point of making one imagine whether her emotions had frozen. Because of the fear, Rook wasn't capable of even whining.

“For you to not even put resistance, I am surprised... next head of the Barusak.”

Riku silently pointed the silver sword forward. Being illuminated by the moonlight, the silver blade shone in a pale light. The sharp point of that sword looked as if it represented Riku's heart.

Rook tightly shut his eyes.

He would be dying here. Because he wanted to make the harem of his ideals, his elder sister had been engulfed by her own darkness, his precious people had been killed one after another, and his friends had been dying with him not even having the chance to see them off. What a lonesome conclusion for his life. Even though he couldn't accomplish anything in his previous life, when he thought he obtained a second chance, he ended up wasting it.

Rook Barusak was about to leave the stage.

It had been such a purposelessly unsightly and comical role.

“Goodbye, Rook Barusak.”

Rook’s view was covered in dark.

In this black and cold darkness, he could hear his elder sister bell-like voice and the sound of her sword cutting through the wind brutally clearly.(TL note: What is a bell-like voice? 、姉(リク)が発した鈴のような声)



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 64**

# .FROZEN WORLD

The pain was going to come.

A pain beyond imagination.

In a few seconds, his head would be cut off and he would die.

Rook Barusak was scared of the pain. Since a long time ago, since his previous world, he hated pain. He wanted to live comfortably without painful feelings. That's why he appropriately studied, was approved at a high school of his standing, fooled around with friends of his standing, and likewise, was approved into an university.

The way he followed his life as Rook Barusak had been the same. Making use of his knowledge as the main character, he intended to live his life without suffering as much as possible so that he would not go through pain.

Because this was his second life, he wanted to live to the end of his days in a happy ending.

Where did he do wrong?

As to endure the pain that was to come, Rook clenched his teeth. And then, he waited for the moment Selestinna's sword would cut through the wind and cut off his head.

"...Huh?"

However, no matter how much he waited, the pain didn't come.

Timidly raising his face, Rook saw that Riku's sword had stopped mid-air. No, it didn't simply stop. Without Riku blinking her eyes or moving her chest in order to breath, and without a single strand of the red hair that would stand out even at night moving, the sword was simply completely suspended.

“Eh, eh? Ri-riku...ane?”

Slowly standing up, Rook brusquely waved his hands. However, Riku didn't show any reactions. Without not even a single frown appearing at her forehead, Riku simply kept looking at the place Rook had been cowering at a few moments ago. He slowly stepped away from her, but without any changes, there wasn't the slightest movement.

“What is this?”

At that moment, Rook noticed that there was no sound.

Only his own voice that had strangely echoed very loudly. Although comparing to the daytime, the nighttime would be quiet, even so, it is impossible that there wouldn't be any sounds. He couldn't hear the agitation at the main street, the cries of a baby, the sound of the wind, or even the sound of the touches cracking with the fire.

“Wh-what is it happening!?”

Only his voice echoed through the back-alley to no purpose.

Rook looked at the surroundings. Riku wasn't the only one that wasn't moving. There was another one that didn't move in Rook's field of vision.

It was Piguro Obis, the staff officer of Leivein Adlar who had been looking at the situation of the battle from a place a little far away from them. With his eyes crossed in an arrogant posture, he silently kept looking at Riku.

“Hey, please answer me. Did the time stop?”

Rook staggeringly approached Piguro. Piguro was introduced in the game with the ranking of [staff officer] at the Demon Lord army. He was someone that gave off the feeling that he had the intelligence to immediately solve any mysteries even in unexpected situations.

Rook was aware that something such as asking the enemy for information was something that was against the pride of spiritualists and something that should be looked with

disdain. However, Rook didn't think that he would be able to get out of the present situation by himself.

"I beg you, answer me!"

If Rook touched Piguro, perhaps his time, which had stopped, would start moving again.

Hanging onto this hope, Rook touched Piguro's arm. At that instant, the point of his finger that had touched him caught fire, and in a blink of an eye, together with a roaring sound, the fire engulfed his whole body.

"U, uwaah!?"

While raising an unsightly scream, Rook took distance from the fire.

With a roar, in an instant, Piguro became on fire. Without raising any cries, Piguro was turned into ashes and the fire vanished into the darkness.

There were no traces remaining at where Piguro was standing at. If one was to press on about it, the best that could be said would be only how the ground there was slightly burnt.

"Why..."

"It is attrition, Rook Barusak."

Suddenly, somebody spoke to Rook from behind.

Hurriedly turning his head, Rook saw the shinigami standing there. While he fondled with his soft looking black wings, the shinigami had the corners of his mouth raised as if he had been extremely happy.

"Even I can't do something like stopping time. All I did was to speed up the time of the area around you and me. That's why it looks like everything has stopped moving, and that anything you touch catches fire."

Rook remembered a talk about how when one goes above the speed of sound, it feels like the words has stopped moving.

In the distant past, he had the feeling he had heard a talk about how in the time a normal person would be able to do a single action, someone that had been sped up would be able to have finished doing ten things. And on the other hand, if one was to touch paper or cloth, with the attrition of the air, it would catch fire.

“Why did you do something like this?”

It would have been better if the shinigami had shown himself after he had stopped Riku from moving.

At least, if the shinigami had told Rook that touching things will make them catch on fire before he touched Piguro, it would have been possible to do without his death without doubt.

The one to kill Piguro wasn't himself. It was obvious the one that killed him was the shinigami. Rook glared at the shinigami. After he did that, the shinigami shook his head as if saying [how regrettable].

“Why, you ask... You see, it's because if that was to go on like that, you would have died. Yes, your head would have been separated from your body with her sword. If that was to happen, wouldn't I be unable to hear out your wish?”

“My... wish?”

The instant Rook heard those words, his heart started pulsating fast.

The things the shinigami had told him after the battle at Sherr island resurfaced at his mind. In exchange for his own soul, the shinigami would grant him a single wish of any kind.

At that time, because of the shock of being told that he had been parasitizing the soul of the true main character, the talk about him having a wish granted had ended. However, it didn't mean that the conversation had been finished there. Rook remembered that it had simply been put off to another day.

“Can you still grant my wish?”

“That is right. I came here to hear your wish after all.”

With a sweet voice that could even melt the brain, the shinigami whispered.

“If you wish for it, I can grant it no matter what it is. Yes... Wasn't it your dream to do your life all over again?”

“My life... Do it over again?”

Rook's pulse started to become faster.

If ten years ago... he had saved Riku, the development of the story wouldn't have changed to this point. At least, Riku wouldn't be at the Demon Lord army, and Selestinna would have been able to survive. If Selestinna would still be alive, then obviously Rebecca and Kurumi wouldn't have died either, and by now, perhaps they would be smiling beside him together with Anna. Piguro, who had been burnt to death a few moments ago, would have been able to survive, and Charlotte wouldn't have refused him at that time.

He wanted to go back to the past.

He wanted to redo his life one more time.

He would correct what had gone wrong, and would aim for it to develop in the way it was supposed to be. If he made a contract with the shinigami, then this time he would be able to form the harem he dreamed of. And besides, this sorrowful future wouldn't exist anymore, and everyone that had died would be able to walk in that world of happiness.

For him to be able to do all this, how marvelous it was.

“Rook, what's the matter? Is there any need for you to hesitate in your current situation?”

But even so, Rook couldn't set his resolve.

He wanted to have his wish granted for his own sake without thinking about anything else. This was the easiest way to solve all this, and he had the feeling that this was the way to have everyone become happy.

However, while clenching both of his hands, he couldn't get to feel like agreeing to that contract.

"I..."

Rook was so scared of having to exchange this for his soul that he couldn't bear.

If he was able to do his life over, he would be able to go back to when he was a child. However, he didn't know at what time did he need to hand over the compensation. To begin with, if he had his soul eaten by the shinigami, what would happen to him after that.

The moment he thought about what would happen in the future, his body started to tremble.

"Are you scared? Rook Barusak.

The shinigami gently extended his hand.

As if consoling him, the hand was gently placed in front of his eyes.

"It is alright. There is no need for you to be scared. It is fine for you to do as you think it is best, and for you to live as you wish."

"For me to live as I wish?"

"That's right. I am here to help you on that."

And so, he had to take his hand and accept the contract.

With the shinigami's sweet words, Rook extended his hand. However, when he was only a step away from taking his hand, he abandoned the idea.

It would have been better if he accepted the contract without thinking about anything. It would have been better for him to wish for being able to do everything over just like the shinigami had told him to. Rook's life and the life of the people that had died would clearly go into a better way if he did so.

"I need to change the world for everyone's sake."

The faces of the girls that couldn't smile once again resurfaced in his mind.

In order to have those girls being capable of smiling once again, to save Riku, whose life has been destroyed, for the sake of the demons that had been unjustly killed and his comrades that had been killed at Karkata, and also for the sake of the true main character that had his soul dried up because of him, he needed to suppress his fear.

In order to change the world, fear was not needed. If he didn't have the resolve to throw away one or two souls, he wouldn't be able to become a main character.

"Is that your wish?"

The eyes of the shinigami had a cold glint that were like the shine of jewels.

Rook silently looked at the shinigami. Looking at the shinigami, who looked to be somewhat happy, Rook's face that was stiff because of his fear softened up a bit.

"I want to change the world. I want to save everyone, have everyone become happy, and make a world that everyone can smile.

He muttered those few words.

He felt that by each word he spoke, the more his thoughts were being solidified.

"But, this... Maybe it is only my selfishness."



“...”

“Yes. This is probably just that I wanted to become happy. That I wanted to create a world centralized on myself.”

The true feelings he had been hiding had finally been shown to the world.

Him wanting to kill Riku was just his personal grudge for Selestinna's death, and him wanting to save Riku was just the regret of how he had left one of the heroines to die. Him wanting Piguro, who he had killed by accident, and the spiritualists that had lost their life at the great defeat of Karkata to come back to life was only because he wanted to run away from his sins.

All of this was nothing but his own biased thoughts.

“That's why, shinigami.”

For some reason, Rook's heart lightened.

As if a fresh air had been blown at it, his heart had calmed down. There was nothing to be scared of anymore.

He didn't know whether this choice was the correct one or not. But he wanted to believe that it wasn't the wrong one.

“My wish is...”

After Rook had told his wish to the shinigami... the [time] that had been stopped started to move once again.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 65**

# GHOST

This guy's life had no worth.

Riku clicked her tongue in a low sound.

After Riku had told him she had killed Selestinna, Rook had finally directed her with killing intent.

Riku was so happy about the killing intent that she couldn't hold herself back. Her body getting animated if it was a natural reaction, and her heart started to tremble because of the excitement. Of course, Riku still remembered the orders of retreat that had been given by Leivein. She knew that perhaps it would be thoughtless of her to exhaust her body in a place like this.

However, until she had killed this enemy that is fallen down at this back-alley, she wouldn't pull back.

After she was finally going to be able to completely beat down a serious enemy, she had to click her tongue.

That is because her excessive expectations had quickly been destroyed to the point of it being sad.

Riku was able to guess by Rook's first attack. She was able to guess that that guy was not an opponent worth fighting.

With his body left to his anger, Rook's swordplay definitely had strength. However, it was nothing but an increase in strength. On other hand, in exchange for that, he had lost other important factors.

Rook wasn't thinking about where to aim at all. Despite his killing intent, she couldn't feel

him wanting to kill her in those blows.

“...Hey, are you properly aiming?”

Laughing it off, Riku mocked Rook.

Riku thought that if she provoked Rook, he would be able to become a little bit more serious about their fight.

However... The result was extremely disappointing, and the more the time passed, the more Rook's attacks became rougher.

If those blows Rook had kept repeatedly sending at her was to even touch her a bit, Riku wouldn't be left untouched.

...But that was if it actually [hit].

Rook's swings were too long, its trajectories were easy to read. Let alone how he had given up on hitting, it was as if he was saying “Feel free to kill me”. Because of how plain the blows were, Riku had suspicions about it being a trap, but then after looking at Rook's eyes, who had lost himself in anger, it didn't seem to be the case.

“Shit, hit, hit, hit, hit, hiiiiit!!”

While letting out annoying yells, he kept recklessly swinging his sword. Because how irritating it was, it made Riku start considering cutting his throat already.

Rook was much more of a small fry than Riku had expected. Only deciding whether there was any worth in fighting with him or not was the problem.

Although Riku had the handicap of having only a single army, if she didn't hold back in addition to that, it wasn't impossible that Rook's life might have ended up reaped at anytime by accident.

...It was such a boring and meaningless fight.

But even so, Riku tried to endure this.

She was in expectation that Rook might still have a hidden trump.

Riku was planning to completely crush Rook and take away every single bit of hope he had. And after that, she would take him back home with her and killing him after torturing him even more.

To have this become true, if Rook was going keep up with this half-assed fighting, there wouldn't be any meaning to it. Whether Rook would have the resolve to stand up and struggle, or then clench his teeth in despair, although Riku wanted the former if possible, what Rook had chosen was the path of the loser.

“Let me kill you already, damn it! You demon!”

The killing intent faded away from Rook's eyes and only fear remained. Riku had completely lost her motivation. While regretting how she had wasted her time for such a boring thing, she decided to change her attitude about this battle.

“...I see, you only amounted to this much.”

As soon as Riku said that, she hit Rook at his stomach with her left elbow.

Riku had changed her mind.

She wouldn't catch him alive and torture him to death. Rather than that, killing him right now seemed to be much better. After all, there were still people she wanted to kill remaining.

Thinking back about it, the one leading the spiritualists at Derufoi and the one to command the army at Karkata was Rook Barusak. Despite him being in a clearly favored position with higher numbers, he had suffered misfortune. There was no way Riku would lose to an opponent of this extend. To begin with, there was no way she would be able to enjoy herself if she continued with this battle.

“Goodbye, Rook Barusak.”

Once Riku declared Rook’s death sentence, Rook started to cry like a pig that was about to be butchered. What was sitting there was the very unsightly figure of the next head of the Barusak.

Looking at him with cold eyes, Riku raised her sword and...

“Hm?”

Riku noticed something was wrong.

Rook was supposed to be trembling with his hands in the head until a few moments ago.

Despite that, Rook wasn’t trembling. Moreover, he was now standing. He was away from the range of Riku’s sword and was glaring at her. He was filled with killing intent, but she felt that he had regained his composure.

More than anything, the eyes that were supposed to be trembling in fear were now burning with fighting spirit.

“...Heh.”

Maybe he used some kind of technique to set her into an illusion, or maybe he activated some other sort of power.

Whatever it may be, it looked like this time she would be able to have some fun. With her feeling of excitement starting to come back, Riku licked her lips.

“Entertain me with your life on line, Rook Barusak.”

Riku nimbly fixed her grasp on her sword.

Riku started to pounder about what in the world had happened at this moment that lasted less than a few seconds, but then, she immediately stopped. Rather than thinking about

such worthless things, she decided to think on how she should cook the enemy in front of her eyes.

“I will be crushing everything you have after all.”

When Riku had just given one step forward, Rook spoke words that made her hesitate.

“Sorry, Riku-ane. I would like to have this end today.”

“...End today?”

With Rook’s words, Riku’s tone of voice went down by one level.

“I... I need to take responsibility for my sins. I indirectly changed the future of Selestinna-chan, Riku-ane, and the others.... I need to make up for that. ...That’s why, I can’t die until then.”

Rook kept talking while having his eyes above Riku’s right shoulder. He spoke to her as if there was someone standing where he was looking at.

“I... There is no way I can die yet. Besides, I want to fight Riku-ane fair and square. I want to fight you, and fix Riku-ane’s wounds and everyone’s regrets. This is something I think I can do for compensating for everything... ...That’s why I can’t rely on the shinigami!!”

Speaking at a fast pace, Rook just like that showed Riku his back and started running away. Right when he turned away from Riku, she immediately started to follow after Rook.

However, the one to give the last word was not herself. While keeping down her heart that seemed it would jump out of her chest, she turned her eyes to where Piguro was.

“Staff officer Piguro! Please, gave me the permission to follow after him! ...Huh?”

However, Piguro’s figure was nowhere to be seem. Rather, even his presence vanished.

Maybe he became scared of her battle with Rook and went ahead to the main forces?

“No, that’s not it.”

Thinking well about that, Riku shook her head.

From what Riku knew, even if Piguro had less merit than Leivein, he would not leave his subordinates in the middle of a battle and run away by himself.

Even if he would get angry and shower Riku with insults, he would still be looking at the battle from the side.

Although she felt he was this kind of person, it seems he had gone to somewhere.

“...That’s weird.”

Riku’s concerns turned from Rook to Piguro’s whereabouts. In the place Piguro was standing, there was a few of some sort of black marks that seemed as if the ground had been scorched.

Crouching down, Riku tried to touch the ashes with her hand. It was still slightly warm. It was as if Piguro had been burnt down. However, if that is the case, then [when] did it happen?

Riku thought back about her exchange with Rook.

Rook was by himself without doubts. There were no presences of other people in the back-alley; it was only Riku, Piguro and Rook. Only the three of them.

From what she knew about Piguro, there was no way he would go kill himself right in front of her eyes. Besides, no matter how much she was deranged at the time, the fire that supposedly turned him into ashes would definitely enter in her view.

“Perhaps... There was a third party?”



Riku uttered the hypothesis she suddenly thought about.

Right at the time before Rook was about to leave, while he was speaking, he wasn't looking at Riku, but looking at the position [around at her left shoulder]. She couldn't sense anyone's presence there, but may there had been a ghost-like third party she couldn't see then?

Regardless of what it was, there was some kind of connection between Piguro's disappearance, the third party, and also Rook's Barusak change in behavior.

“Coloneeel!!”

While Riku was thinking about those things, she heard Roppu's voice.

Without lowering his speed despite bleeding from his abdomen, he approached Riku.

“We successfully carried the princess outside the royal capital. All there is left to do is to escape from here... By the way, where is staff officer?”

“He went back ahead... Probably. ...Let's go, Roppu.”

Grasping the ashes, Riku followed after Roppu.

While having her mind jumbled up with mysteries, Riku escaped from the royal capital.

—

After the red hair that would stand out even at night and the silver hair left the place, the

shinigami showed himself.

Looking at the direction of the water fountain plaza, which was where the silver haired disappeared to, he spoke in a bored tone.

“Really, no meals this time either.”

While hanging his head down dispirited, this time he looked at the direction outside the royal capital, which was where the red haired left to. The moment he turned his eyes, the shinigami’s eyes started to sparkle.

And then, extremely happy, he muttered.

“Soon enough, it will be the time to eat the other soul.”

While slightly drooling, the shinigami muttered. There was no person around to hear those words.

The only ones that knew of these words were the rats running around in the darkness of the night at the royal capital.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 66**

# .FISSURE

By the time Riku and Roppu had regrouped with the other troops, it started to rain.

The troops leaded by Leivein were settled at a forest a bit away from the royal capital hiding there.

Even though the trees served as substitutes for umbrellas, the rain would still steal the warmth of the body. All both of them could do was to wait there and have the hood of their raincoat low over the eyes and keep in hiding there.

“...You are late, captain.”

With her raincoat on, she peeked through the gaps of the trees.

About only half an hour had passed since they escaped from the royal capital. However, Leivein still didn't come back. Riku strained her eyes as much as possible to see at the distance, but there were no results to doing that.

Minute by minute, the time kept passing.

The more the time passed, the more Riku became unable to contain herself.

“Roppu, I leave this place to you. I will go see the situation there.”

“Pl-please wait, colonel Riku!! Isn't colonel still worn out!!”

But Roppu held Riku's left arm in order to stop her. The other Riku demon subordinates also hurriedly went over to try stop Riku. One person clung at her foot, another one went in front of her path to try block her, and another one tried to hold her down by holding her shoulders from behind.

“That’s not good, colonel! Did you forget the order to retreat!?”

“Didn’t we properly deliver princess Catherine to them? Colonel’s work has already been finished!!”

“That’s right! If you don’t rest, you will die of blood loss, colonel!”

Riku herself didn’t care about her condition. However, from any other people’s perspective, it was clear that Riku’s body was close to her limit.

Of course she had stopped the bleeding, but even so, she had lost a great amount of blood.

Since she had left the royal capital, Riku has been walking unsteadily and her view started to tremble. They understood that Riku was worried about Leivein. But now that she finished her task, Roppu and the other demons believed that having her body rest and recover its strength had the priority.

“Thank you for worrying about me. But I will be going.”

However, Riku declined their warnings. Riku glared at the demon that was holding her shoulders behind her back.

“To begin with, other than me... Is there any soldiers that has a chance of victory against Raimon Barusak?”

“Th-that... So is the case, but...”

“And so, I will be going now.”

In order to advance forward, Riku acted to the point of pushing the demons aside.

While raising a small groan, the demons desperately tried to hold Riku down.

“Co-colonel! Please, stop!”

“Please, be patient! Please, just for now, be patient!”

“Step back. This... Is an order.”

Muttering in a low voice, Riku forcefully shook away the demons.

A great number of demons fell down to the ground, and while giving a sidelong glance to them, Riku went forward. However, even if she was able to shake away her subordinates, Riku had reached her limit. When she gave one step, she felt her strength leaving her in one go. By the time Riku could only give three steps, her sight became blurred and she ended up falling on her knees.

“...Uuu.”

Leaning on a tree, Riku put her left hand on her forehead.

Not only her view was becoming blurry, but a silver powder started to fly around. She started to hear a piercing buzzing in her ears.(TL note: ???)

“But I...”

“Very well, then I will go check it myself.”

With those muttered words, Riku felt the blood leaving her face.

Raising her head sluggishly, she turned her eyes to the direction of that voice. Standing there, there was a small shadow wearing a hood.

“Yes, it seems you’ve captured the princess. You’ve done well, colonel Riku Barusak. In a few days, you will be promoted to major general.”

While saying that, the small shadow approached her.

Riku became unable to speak anything due to the appearance of the person that wasn't supposed to be here. As if the small shadow had misunderstood Riku's reaction, after thinking a bit, she removed her hood without caring about the rain.

"It has been a long time, colonel Riku Barusak. Have you forgot? It is me, me."

"...It has been a long time, Charlotte...sama."

After Riku greeted her, Charlotte nodded satisfied.

"Umu, umu, you remembered, Colonel. You may think this as a honor; I will personally go check the situation of general Leivein Adlar and his subordinates."

Charlotte left the place high in spirits. In place of Riku or other demons, Charlotte was going to check Leivein's situation.

That's why, without thinking...

"Please, wait!"

Riku spoke.

Riku was in panic. Everything Charlotte got herself involved didn't end up well. If Riku let Charlotte go to the royal capital, she will without doubt come back carrying problems with her. Moreover, Leivein was at the royal capital. He will definitely end up dragged into it.

"It's dangerous. Please, you shouldn't go, Charlotte-sama!"

In order to not have Leivein get in danger even more than that, she must at least not let Charlotte go.

However, destiny was heartless. Without even noticing Riku's feelings, Charlotte showed a kindhearted smile.

“There is nothing to worry. What? I will be back in a few moments.”

Saying only that, bringing some soldiers along with her, Charlotte left the forest and headed towards the capital.

Even if Charlotte was going to where Leivein is, if it is someone like her, she will only increase the problems. Even if it is only for a minute, Riku needed to stop her.

Riku hurriedly tried to go after her, but she tripped on her feet and she ended up falling down. Even though she did an ukemi, without she being able of doing it properly with only her left arm, Riku violently hit her head onto the ground. (TL note: Ukemi is that judo thingy you do to lessen the impact of a fall. I couldn't think of a way to translate this to english :/)

With bad conditions such as the cold rain pouring at her, the intense pain, the accumulated exhaustion, and as if this wasn't enough, the lack of blood, Riku's sight was gradually becoming black.

“Captain... Leivein...”

Even if she tried to stand up, she couldn't muster strength.

Even if she tried to extend her hand, she couldn't raise her arm.

There was nothing that could be done. She couldn't do anything anymore. Strength kept leaving her body.

Just before her consciousness was wrapped by the darkness, she had the feeling that she had heard the sound of an explosion coming from the direction of the royal capital.

—

It has been two weeks since then.



Riku's accomplishment for successfully abducting princess Catherine was acknowledged, and it has been decided that she would be exempted from the exam and be promoted to major general.

The ones that had influence in the government were mostly demons of noble birth, and the ones that could submit changes in the policies for the demon race were demons of rank above general.

But even so, considering the ranking of a major general on the army, it was still possible for those of that rank to give their opinions.

At that day, Riku had been invited to the Demon Lord castle for her first participation of the meeting.

While fixing the collar of her newly-made military uniform, she straightened her back and walked through the corridor. Her straightened up back looked exalted, and to anyone that would look at her, she looked like a diligent person oozing out with honesty.

Lazily looking at Riku's back, Vrusto let out an exhausted sigh.

"...Hey, ojou-chan. Uh... Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. There is nothing to be worried about."

Even though Vrusto worriedly spoke to her, Riku indifferently answered back.

Riku was in this mood all the time since she came back from the royal capital. If taking into consideration how she had lost one arm and other things too, it wouldn't be strange if Riku became depressed and became a shut-in. But despite all those things, from the outward, Riku maintained a composed appearance.

For what Vrusto heard, the Demon Lord army had had a good fight at the royal capital.

That was especially for Leivein Adlar, who was able to fight Raimon to equality.

However, that fight was nothing but a diversion for the sake of successfully abducting the

princess.

Therefore, once Riku had retreated, Leivein too would withdraw. The attack of the pursuing spiritualists was fierce, but even so, they somehow were able to get to the gates of the capital. And when they finally rushed out to outside the gates... An incident had happened.

“”Mu, you are too late. I became tired of waiting.””

The provisional Demon Lord Charlotte had gone to where Leivein was on her own volition.

Because of the unexpected appearance of Charlotte, Leivein and his subordinates were caught off guard. Right at that time, from the lookouts of the royal capital, the spiritualists launched a massive attack onto them. Infusing demon banning power into the catapults, they had poured a hail of stones onto the demons.

Charlotte, who had been protected by Leivein, was able to be left out without serious injuries. However, the same couldn't be said to Leivein. The compensation for protecting Charlotte from the attack was big; without any signs of waking up, he became in coma. From what the doctor had said, the possibility of him waking up again was extremely low and the hope of him being cured was close to zero.

Riku adored Leivein.

After hearing something like that, it would be impossible for her to live normally. Rather, the situation was to the point that it wouldn't be strange if Riku abandoned her work and kept staying at the room Leivein was in.

However, without any signs of Riku caring about Leivein's state, Riku was showing enthusiasm on participating in the meeting.

By what Vrusto had seen from how Riku would act at the battlefield or the sliver of insanity he had seen at that time at Karkata, it felt as if Riku was a different person.

“For me to worry... It's obvious I would be worrying about you. When I finally thought you guys came back, you had lost you right arm, staff officer Piguro is missing, and

captain Leivein became...”

“Be silent, second lieutenant Vrusto.”

For the first time, the glint on Riku’s eyes had changed.

Her devoted and honest expression didn’t change, but her eyes had the glint it would have when she would succumb to her insanity at the times in the battlefield. Although Vrusto became relieved that Riku didn’t change, because of the pressure, his fur stood up.

“Sorry, I won’t say anything.”

With the glint of Riku’s eyes, Vrusto became unable to say anything.

With the two not talking to each other, both headed towards the meeting room.

From then on, except for the provisional Demon Lord, bringing in escorts was not allowed. And so, Riku had to go in by herself.

“...You may go now. Now, go finish your tasks.”(TL note: I don’t know how to translate this ->ここまで結構<-to english. Well, this pretty much means: it’s enough for you to follow me up to here. I just don’t know well how to phrase this up.)

Riku said without turning her head to Vrusto.

“...Understood, ojou-chan.”

“I am a major general now, second lieutenant Vrusto.”

Recognizing that Vrusto had heard her, Riku opened the door to the meeting room.

Looking at her small back vanishing at the other side of the door, Vrusto was taken by a feeling of loneliness.

At the time Riku entered the meeting room, most of the demons were already present.

While sitting on their chairs, they threw a sidelong glance at the newcomer. Without caring about those gazes, Riku sat down at her seat. The mustached demons were whispering about something. The majority were nobles of prestigious families that didn't belong to the military.

She had felt some interest in those conversations, but only for today, she would keep looking forward without caring about those.

“Umu, I’ve been late.”

Five minutes had passed since Riku had entered in the meeting room.

“Before we start the meeting, I will introduce you our new member. ...Hey, stand up.”

With Riku standing up as she had been ordered, Charlotte nodded satisfied.

“It is major general Riku Barusak. Because now general Leivein Adlar is retired due to his injuries, she will be temporarily be the division commander of the fourth army’s Dragon Demon Division. Therefore, because of this exception, her authority will be the same as one of a general. Does anyone have any objections?”

The place fell silent.

Nobody was saying anything. The demons that were involved with politics twisted their face, but at the moment, even the staff officer of the Dragon Demon division Piguro is missing. If considering the military ranks, having major general Riku fill Leivein’s hole was a reasonable choice, and so it was difficult to object.

Giving a glance through the meeting room, Charlotte nodded once again while saying “Umu”.

“It seems there are no objections. Then, from now on, major general Riku Barusak has the authority of a general... In other words, she had the authority to control the division and the authority to submit documents. ...Major general Riku Barusak, do you have anything to say about this?”

While had been silently hearing Charlotte’s words while looking at her forehead. (TL note: Maybe it would be better if I wrote face? Well, the literal translation is “somewhat at the forehead” though.)

However, because Charlotte had spoken to her, Riku needed to answer. Riku calmly lowered her head.

“I have nothing to say.”

“Umu, now then, today’s topic will...”

“Before that, I would like to propose a topic. Would that be acceptable?”

Charlotte became wide-open at Riku’s words.

But that surprise only lasted for an instant, and at the next moment, with sparkling eyes, she looked at Riku.

“As expected of the person that climbed up to major general in your age. Anytime I meet you, you are always enthusiastic about your job. Umu, since today’s topic isn’t very important, you may speak.”

Charlotte leaned forward a bit and was now listening to what Riku had to say.

It seemed she was interested in the first topic Riku was going to propose since she became a major general. The ministers and nobles that had been looking at Riku with contempt a while ago and also the demons that were affiliated to the military were all now paying attention to Riku.

The sights of everyone in the meeting room were now all onto Riku.

“Thank you very much.”

Riku turned her eyes from Charlotte’s forehead to her eyes that were filled with curiosity.

Although everyone was paying attention to her right now, there was nothing for her to be afraid about.

There was nothing to hesitate. Right now, all she needed to do was to act in accord to her beliefs.

In a well projected and clear voice, Riku spoke of what has always been hiding in her heart.

“I... would like to propose the dismissal of the provisional demon lord Charlotte Demonz.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 67**

# EIGHT DAYS BEFORE THE START OF THE WAR

In an instant, the meeting room was wrapped up in voices of uproar.

There was a great variety in their reactions. It was as if someone had put a nest of bees in the meeting room.

While Riku was silently hearing all their voices, and Charlotte's eyes became wide-open and she became petrified.

This moment has finally arrived.

Riku raised the corners of her mouth. This was something she had been thinking about since she had regained consciousness... Or so to speak, eight days before this.

---

“Alright, I will kill Charlotte.”

Those words.

Those words Riku declared were the start of everything.

Rather, if one was to be more accurate, perhaps it would be the instant when Asty blurted out about Leivein's condition.

When Riku asked Asty if Leivein was fine, honestly to a fault, she ended up telling Riku the truth. The more Asty spoke about it, the more Riku frowned, and by the time she had



finished telling the last details, with her hands clenched, Riku was about to stand up at anytime.

“Asty, do you know where Charlotte is?”

While silently showing a smile, she gently asked Asty.

While mumbling her usual “Hmm...de gozaru” as she thought, she lightly rubbed her finger on her chin.

“Probably at the highest tower of the Demon Lord castle... But, what are you thinking about-de gozaru!!? Colonel, you must stay put-de gozaru!!”

Asty, who came back to her senses, hurriedly stood in front of Riku.

If she was to let Riku by without caring, maybe Riku would really go kill Charlotte.

Looking at Riku right now, she was already holding her halberd with her left hand. Besides that, while having the glint on her eyes she would have she is at the battlefield, she was wrapped within a dense killing intent.

It was not even needed to think about it.

Riku was seriously going to kill Charlotte. Setting her resolve, Asty carefully chose her words in order to calm Riku down for the time.

“Colonel, you need to contain your anger for now-de gozaruyo. First of all, if you were to kill Charlotte-sama, the provisional Demon Lord, it would be considered that you committed treason against the Demon Lord army-de gozaru. You would lose your standing at the Demon Lord army-de gozaruyo.”

Although Asty boldly begged to Riku as if she was calming down a horse, it ended up like she was putting oil into the fire. The glint on Riku’s eyes became even worse and Asty was showered by a gaze that was colder than usual.

“Anger? Contain?”

Riku muttered those two words. Her voice had an stillness that was as if it came resounding from the depths of hell.

With the level of anger that surpassed Riku's usual, Asty's back became soaked with sweat. Although her body started to tremble with fear, she didn't even have the spare time to be noticing that.

"Once someone harms captain Leivein, this someone's death is decided. Even if it is the provisional Demon Lord, I will have her have a suitable punishment."

"Th-that is not good-de gozaru! If you were to kill the head of the Demon Lord army, you will be killed by general Leivein later-de gozaruyo!"

Asty desperately tried to hang on, but Riku's intent didn't change.

"That is fine by me."

Without hesitation in her eyes, she looked straight to the door.

The average demon would not have chances of winning against Charlotte, who bears the title of provisional demon lord. However, if it was the Demon Lord army's ace Riku, how would it be? Even if she had lost her dominant arm, it was possible to imagine her easily winning against Charlotte.

Even if she were to fight against Charlotte, she wouldn't lose.

Asty had to agree that since that was the case, then perhaps it would actually be fine to let Riku go. However, after thinking about what would be happening next, she hurriedly shook her head.

"Even if it is acceptable, it is no good-de gozaru!! The punishment for killing the provisional demon lord is execution-de gozaru! I don't want colonel Riku to die-de gozaruyo!"

"...Asty."

With that small mutter, Riku's expression suddenly changed.

For a brief moment, Asty became relieved thinking that Riku had finally understood what she was saying. But then, Riku's halberd cut through the wind, raising a sound. Because of the sudden attack, Asty had to put her all only to draw her sword. Before Asty could wield her sword, it had been knocked off her hand, and now, the tip of the axe blade was pointed next to her throat.

"This is the final warning, Asty Gortoberuk. Let me pass."

Riku's voice was cold in all aspects.

Asty had no way to stand against that. She couldn't win against Riku with her fists, and her sword had fallen down to the floor. Her sword was at a distance that even if she was to extend her hand as much as she could, she wouldn't be able to reach it. Even if she was able to reach out for her sword, before she could act, her head would probably be sent flying.

"Co-colonel..."

If she didn't obey Riku now, she would lose her life.

But even so, Asty hesitated.

If she let Riku pass, she felt it would become an unrecoverable situation. Riku also should have felt Asty holding that hesitation. After slightly closing her eyes...

"I see, this is your answer."

As if she was disappointed, Riku declared Asty's death sentence.

Asty back muscles stood up. The heartless face Asty had seen many times when Riku would kill was now looking at her. She was giving her all just by standing up. Without hesitations, Riku mustered strength and was about to go kill Asty. And then...

“That’s enough, colonel Riku Barusak.”

Suddenly, the door opened.

A big man with magnificent horns and that lacked one of his arms was standing in front of the door. The instant Riku saw the figure of the man, her face became grimmer, and Asty’s face relieved.

“Your killing intent was leaking even outside the room, you know? It is nice that you are honest, but you need to train yourself to suppress your emotions a little.”

Rudogar Gortoberuk resolutely entered in the room.

“What, I’m just. There are only a few demons that noticed colonel’s killing intent.”(TL note: I don’t know what this means ->なに、私の部下が人払いをさせている<-)

“Ho-honored grandfather...”

After Asty raised a voice that was like that of a chicken on the verge of being strangled to death, Riku went out of her stance. Once Asty was released, the mood that seemed to be frozen loosened, and as if a string that was holding her was cut, Asty sat down.

Seeing her granddaughter like that, Gortoberuk lightly patted her shoulder.

“Asty, you’ve done well in stopping the colonel. I will give you some pocket money later.”(TL note: It feels kind of strange for him to give her pocket money because of that... Here is the japanese raw just in case ->アスティ、よく大佐を止めたな。あとで小遣いをやろう<-)

“Honored grandfather... Thank you-de gozaru...”

“Do you have any business with me, general Gortoberuk?”

While glaring at the conversation between grandfather and granddaughter, Riku asked Gortoberuk.

Riku was wary of Gortoberuk's appearance, which seemed as if it had been planned. Riku had the resolve to kill Gortoberuk without hesitations if he was to report the conversation that happened just now to Charlotte. With both being fellows about them being one-armed, Gortoberuk won in experience. However, Riku had already seen that she was stronger than him.

Right now, even at this instant... Riku was capable of defeating Gortoberuk.

"...What, you may calm down . I also have the same thoughts as colonel."

While patting his granddaughter's shoulder, Gortoberuk said in a calm voice.

"Although I was actually intending on having that in a more peaceful manner."

"The same thoughts?"

When she had heard that Gortoberuk had the same thoughts as her, a bit of strength left the hand that was holding the halberd. However, those might have been words to lower her guard. Without lowering her vigilance, Riku had asked Gortoberuk once again.

After she did that, Gortoberuk smile vanished from his face.

"I also believe that the provisional demon lord Charlotte should be dismissed."

His face was showing an expression serious in all aspects. Without faltering in his voice, general Gortoberuk continued his words.

"If considering the future of the Demon Lord army, it is difficult to tolerate someone like that being at the top. Until now, I've been obeying her since she was the Demon Lord's younger sister... But as to be expected, I've reached my limit."

"In that case, isn't it fine to kill her?"

With Riku saying that, Gortoberuk shook his head.

“...If you simply kill her, you will be accused of that crime. Besides, you, Colonel Riku... No, major general Riku... You are an existence that will be shouldering the Demon Lord army from now on. I don't want to discard the junior generation for the sake of dethroning that woman.”

Gortoberuk's eyes had a sharp glint on them.

To Riku, it didn't seem like Gortoberuk was telling lies.

“I see. In that case... What do you intend on doing, general Gortoberuk?”

Riku calmly placed her halberd at her armpit as she said that. Although it was at her armpit, it was still at a place where she would be able to reach out for the halberd. If something was to happen, she would be able to immediately retaliate. In order to clear up Riku's vigilance, Gortoberuk told her his plan with sincere thoughts.

“After eight days, together with colonel's promotion to major general, they will also be holding a meeting. At that place, major general Riku is to propose the [dismissal of Charlotte]. Until then, we will be increasing our allies.”

“Allies? I don't think there are any demons that would want to be allies with me though.”

Riku snorted.

Riku was aware that she was hated because she was a human. There was the looks of contempt she had always been given since she had been recruited at the Dragon Demon Division. She couldn't think that something like that could be cleared away in only eight days no matter what.

As if he had read Riku's thoughts, Gortoberuk raised three of his fingers.

“The demons participating at the meetings are divided into three groups. The first one is made of demons that will obey Charlotte no matter what. ...It is impossible to drag in allies from this group. The second one is made of opportunistic demons. Actually, most of the demons are in this group. They are following Charlotte now, but they can easily change sides to where it is more convenient for themselves. They are fellows that can't be

trusted, but they will be what most of our allies are.”

Gortoberuk lowered down the first and the second finger he had raised. With his remaining finger, he pointed at Riku.

“The third group is of demons that has doubts on Charlotte’s methods even if it is a little. If we are able to pull some allies from there, we will be able to make the opportunistic demons move.”

In Riku’s mind, the image of Charlotte standing by herself at the meeting surfaced.

No matter how much authority she had, if they were to get allies to their side, she would become outnumbered. It will be possible to corner her into her dethronement.

If they were to succeed in doing so, Charlotte would become her “plaything”.

If she loses her title as the provisional demon lord, Charlotte would become a normal demon. Even if Riku boils or roasts Charlotte, she won’t be accused of any crime.

“I see...”

After hearing Gortoberuk’s words, Riku recovered her composure.

Even if she wins Leivein’s grudge, she will be able to avoid being judged by the other demons. Besides, the feeling of wanting to remain next to him once Leivein recovers his consciousness was also strong.

In order to make the future where she remains at her current position and continues to serve under Leivein become true, she needed to kill Charlotte herself no matter what.

Riku’s stiffen face softened.

“General, how many people are there in the meeting?”

After seeing Riku’s attitude, Gortoberuk let out a happy smile.

“A hundred demons will be gathering there. If we get the support of more than half of them, it will be our victory.”

Without any issues, both of them held each other's hands.

With the hands that weren't their dominant hand, both Riku and Gortoberuk firmly shook their hands.

Until the meeting, there were eight days left.

That was going to be the moment the trigger for the decisive battle had silently been pulled.



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 68**

# A NORMAL DAY THAT IS LIKE ANY

The early summer wind was blowing at Myuuz castle.

Vrusto Asuteroid let out a big yawn.

The color of the plant buds became greener and fruits slowly started to ripen. Looking at the sky, it was possible to see clouds that looked like cotton candies calmly floating around. It was a season that made one want to eat frozen sweets while enjoying the fresh breeze under the shadow of the trees free of care.

“Fuwaa... So sleepy.”

His break time would soon finish, and then it would be the time for the afternoon’s training.

Vrusto was entrusted with the supervision of the training while Riku was not present. Because he had to accompany the demons at their training every day, he would only be able to finish through the documents only after the sun had set . Besides, because it was not only his share that he was responsible for, but also the share of Riku and the other demons that went to the royal capital, he didn’t have enough time.

It was a daily life of moving around with all his power at the day and glaring at documents at night. If his body was to break down soon, it wouldn’t be weird.

“Really, wake up already... That stupid girl.”

While taking out a bottle of water, Vrusto complained.

Although Riku had returned from the royal capital, she still didn’t wake up.

And so, likewise, today he would need to train the demon soldiers until his throat dried up too.

“...Haa. Even if I say all that, it won’t change anything, I guess.”

Biting onto the lid of the bottle, Vrusto skillfully opened it up. The cold water went through the throat that was worn out from screaming. At that day, Vrusto was finally able to get some rest.

Summer was a very mild season.

But even if it was such a warm weather, he needed to complete his tasks. Today at the afternoon he needed to train the demon soldiers, and surely today as well he will only be able to finish doing everything after he used up all his time just like yesterday. This was evidence that today was a peaceful day, and so there weren’t any problems, nor did Vrusto intend to complain about it.

Besides that, the demon side had abducted the princess of the humans. It wouldn’t be weird if they attacked for retribution for that anytime now. Even though it was peaceful, he needed to focus his mind and be prepared for battle.

Vrusto tapped his face in order to motivate himself... And it was at that instant.

“Hiiiiii....!”( ひiiiiii..... ! )

“Do not fear! That guy is wounded!! Besides, it is a human!”

“Stupid, there is no way we can win.”

Because of someone’s screams, Vrusto’s ears jumped up.

Miserable screams together with the sound of an intense sword fighting reverberated from the direction of the training grounds.

“Really, what happened?”

Switching off from his apathetic thoughts in an instant, he ran straight to the training grounds.

Among the words that were screamed, there was the word [human].

Nine out of ten, by saying human... It would be in other words that spiritualists had appeared.

The Myuuz castle had fallen in the hands of the humans once.

Because the place had been devastated, spiritualists might invade at any instant. However, because there were no reports that the fort that protected the vanguard of Myuuz, the one attacking is not a big army, but one or two spiritualists at best. If it is only this many, it should be possible to easily defeat them.

“What kind of guy did come for it to become a tough fight for them.”

Moving his nose, he sniffed the air. However, he couldn't sniff any unfamiliar smell.

In that case, inevitably, it would mean that this was the work of someone here.

“Hey, what happened... Hm?”

The instant Vrusto looked at the training grounds, he became startled.

The demon soldiers that were stationed at Myuuz castle were demons of the second and third division that put all their effort to improve their physique and techniques.

They weren't demons that would be defeated by average enemies, but even so, those strong demons were laid at the ground at their wit's end. One after the next one was crumbling down and becoming part of the mountain of corpses there.

Looking at the demon soldiers being easily defeated to the point of it being sad, the culprit for this situation smiled.

“What is it? You didn’t slack just because I wasn’t here, right?”

The strong demons were completely suppressed by the single red haired demon.

“What are you doing, ojou-chan?!”

Forgetting his exhaustion, when Vrusto came back to himself, he was already shouting.

“You came, second lieutenant Vrusto. Have your break time ended?”

“Stupid. Because of you, I had to end it sooner! Besides, you still aren’t completely recovered, right? What are you doing by massacring the subordinates!!”

Vrusto held his belly.

A stinging pain went through his stomach.

Vrusto had been worrying about Riku a lot. He felt stupid for being troubled on how he was supposed to cheer her up about she losing one of her arms after she woke up.

“You are livelier than I thought you would be. Really, right after you wake up, you are already beating the soldiers.”

“It is training. I need to get back in shape fast, you see.”

Riku lightly swung her halberd. Its tip was pointed to Vrusto.

“What about Vrusto? Won’t you have a match with me?”

“No, I would have to decline. I’m not in the mood to be fighting ojou-chan.”

While raising both of his arms as if he was surrendering, Vrusto glanced around the training grounds.

Every single one of the demons were sprawled at the ground. The only ones that were unharmed were the demons that were watching from the sides because they didn't want to get wrapped into this. They wouldn't expose their neck to danger. After agreeing in his mind that that was a wise choice, Riku spoke to Vrusto.

“Second lieutenant Vrusto, I will be going to the demon capital tomorrow. Prepare the arrangements.”

“Yes, yes... Hm, demon capital? Tomorrow?”

Vrusto unconsciously asked back.

Riku had lost one of her arms, had been unconscious for three days, and when Vrusto was still thinking on how she went and completely beat the soldiers right after waking up, she now told him she was going to the demon capital.

Vrusto though it was some kind of joke, but Riku had a serious face on.

“Yes. Together with my promotion to major general, they will be holding a meeting. Because it is necessary to bring escorts along, I will have you accompany me.”

Riku said those outrageous things as if it was the obvious.

Vrusto had heard that if Riku was to successfully abduct the princess, she would be promoted to major general. However, he didn't think it would be this much fast. Rather, more than that, what troubled Vrusto was the word [escort]. Vrusto also had his own job to do. If he pulled an all-nighter, he could finish sorting things out, but he wanted to sleep in his bed before departing to somewhere.

“Heh, it is very fast. Congratulations for the promotion. By the way, don't ojou-chan thinks that it wouldn't be a problem even if ojou-chan doesn't bring an escort?”

“According to general Gortoberuk, it is necessary for me to have the dignity of a major general. Dignity, you see.”

After immediately replying, Riku put her halberd on her back. It seems that her decision wouldn't change regardless of Vrusto's thoughts. Vrusto words were only useless struggle.

"Dignity, right... And then, who are you bringing with you? Besides, isn't general Gortoberuk absent? What are we going to do about the command?"

"I will leave Myuuz to Gortoberuk's subordinates and Asty. I am planning on leaving the contacting in emergencies to Roppu."

"..."

It seems that everything had already been planned on Riku's mind.

In reality, Vrusto's position was higher than Asty's, and he was the one supposed to be left with the command.

"Ah-ah, it will be an all-nighter."

"Is that so? Do your best. Now then, I will be calling the name of the soldiers I will be bringing along with me. If your name is called, then you are to gather in front of the gate tomorrow early in the morning. We are departing right as the sun will be rising."

While Vrusto's lamentations now were being directed to another place, Riku immediately walked to where the soldiers fallen on the ground were.

"Beah Applefield, Sahmon Makkenji, Hanii Hant..."

The reactions of the soldiers that had their name called varied for each of them.

Some people would be full of delight on their face as if that was honor itself for them to accompany her, and other people would have their eyes filled with exhaustion just like Vrusto's. However, there was nobody that looked at Riku with hate. Looking at the reaction of the soldiers, Vrusto noticed something weird.

"Gurizri Araska. Those are the fifty names. Now, follow me."

“””Yes.”””

Hearing their responses, Riku left the training grounds.

Hurriedly following after Riku’s small back, Vrusto asked for an explanation of the thing he had noticed then.

“Hey, is this ok? To have those members...”

“Yes, it is fine. Among the ones that I fought today, there were a few that were more or less strong.”

“Maybe that is so... But there are quite a lot of those that used to follow general Zerrik, you know?”

Vrusto whispered to Riku.

Of course, there were many demons that had recognized her since the time she was still at the Dragon Demon Division and demons that had started to obey her since she came to the Myuuz castle among those she chose. However, for some reason, there were those demons that swore loyalty to Zerrik mixed up amongst them. And besides, it wasn’t the demons that had recognized Riku, but demons of the “anti Riku faction” that had put resistance until the end.

“Even if you say stuff about dignity, those guys might try plot something to harm that dignity, right?”

“Those worries are unnecessary.”

Looking at Vrusto’s face, Riku let out a faint smile.

“That is because those guys recognized me.”

“Recognized?”



“Not that I am proud of that, but I am strong enough to the point of defeating all those soldiers despite having lost one arm.”

Riku nonchalantly continued to speak.

“That’s right. To tell the truth, the only people stronger than ojou-chan are pretty much only people that are as strong as captain. Then, does that have anything to do with that?”

“...General Edgar Zerrik was a muscle-brained man. The soldiers that had been raised by him also took over the same nature.”

Vrusto wanted to say “You don’t say “. However, he had the feeling that Riku wanted to speak about something. He wanted to avoid having her not be able to speak because of him irritating her. Thinking of that, Vrusto forced himself to swallow those words.

“...Well, that’s true. General Zerrik gave the feeling of someone that would say “Strength is everything! The power of the demon race surpasses everything!” and so.”

“In other words, if I overpower them with strength, I can make them submit. Moreover, if I also recognize their power in addition to that, I can have them completely under my control.”

Riku continued to speak in a tone that didn’t differ from her normal voice.

Vrusto gasped at Riku’s explanation. Indeed, the reason why the demons that used to be under Zerrik didn’t recognize Riku was because Riku was a human, and they didn’t want a human standing above them.

Perhaps, the reason why Riku immediately headed to the training grounds was to win over Zerrik’s subordinates, making them submit with her strength.

There is no way demons she had defeated extremely easily despite becoming one-armed would be comparable to her power. She is putting her [trust] on those guys to the point of bringing them along to the demon capital as her escorts. Vrusto had his doubts about them really losing their spirit of rebellion because of such a simple reason, but once he remembered those demons used to be subordinates of Zerrik, he was able to accept it.

Whether it was for good or for bad, those were [simple] guys.

“Besides... Even though I said to them I would bring them along, nobody said any complaints, right?”

“I guess. Even the guys that had a funny face on had kind of accepted that.”

One way or another, they gave off the feeling of acknowledgement.

Just like Vrusto, they should have complaints in their mind. However, they obeyed her despite that because they had recognized Riku, and because they were her subordinates after all.

The Demon Lord army was sorted into four big divisions.

Because Piguro's whereabouts are unknown, in the fourth army... The Dragon Demon division, leaded by Leivein, lacked a superior officer. Probably once Riku gets promoted to major general, she will be called back to the Dragon Demon Division and temporally be given the command.

And besides that, Riku had complete control of the third division and second division that were stationed at Myuuz.

The commander for both of those, Gortoberuk, greatly favored Riku. Without doubt, with only a single call from Riku, the troops of Myuuz would move.

...The remaining ones were the first division, leaded by the provisional demon lord Charlotte.

They were elite-picked exceptional troops, but in exchange for that, their numbers were few when compared to the other divisions.

Riku wondered what could Charlotte be thinking for her to let she have authority of more than half of the military.

“...Hey, ojou-chan, could you be.... Planning on going into the demon capital and murder

the provisional demon lord Charlotte?”

“As if.”

With Vrusto timidly asking that, Riku snorted.

“Leivein had prohibited me from doing things like assassination.”

“Ah, now that you say that, he had told you that at Derufoi.”

Although not even one year have passed, it felt like a distant memory. Was the prophecy of the Shibira still continuing? Or maybe she had only seen the blood of when Riku had lost one of her arms? If it is the latter, then it is not something she could control. But in the case the prophecy still continued, Riku would need to be on guard for what would happen thereafter.

Before Vrusto started to warn her about the prophecy, said, just remembering about it.

“By the way, if... In case Charlotte was to be retired, who would be the one to succeed her?”

“Charlotte is the provisional demon lord. Besides, don’t say things that bring bad luck like retirement and so.”

Vrusto lightly patted Riku’s back.

He didn’t intent on patting her with too much strength, but Riku ended up stumbling forwards. Perhaps, because she became one-armed, she couldn’t get a good grasp on her center of balance. After regaining her balance, she looked at Vrusto with a gaze filled with resentment.

“...What are you doing?”

“No, nothing really. Well, there are no good candidates to take command. There is nobody but Pluutos-sama, the youngest of the Demon Lord’s siblings, and Pluutos-sama is a cultured person that has no interest in war.”

There are very few relatives of the Demon Lord.

The strongest demon race who had inherited the power of the [dragon] had been mostly annihilated by the demon lord. The remaining ones were pretty much Leivein's family and Pluuto's family.

However, because Leivein hasn't show any hopes of waking up, inevitably, Pluutos himself or his playboy son was the ones that would inherit the throne. If that was to happen, it would be the end for the Demon Lord army.

"That's why I told you. There is nobody to replace her."

Vrusto bluntly declared.

Vrusto knew Riku hated Charlotte. Leivein only had told her to not do shady things like assassination, but in the end, he only prohibited that. Because it is about Riku that it is being talked about, she might end up saying something like "It is not assassination; I'm going to directly kill her head on fair and square".

He wanted to pluck out this possibility while it was still early.

"Right now, there is no other way except for obeying the provisional demon lord Charlotte. Do you understand, ojou-chan?"

As if to persuade Riku, Vrusto lightly stroke her red hair.

Without saying anything, Riku silently kept gazing forward.

"I'm asking if you understood!"

"....Yes, there is no other way except for obeying Charlotte for now. That's why I will properly attend to the meeting."

With a unsatisfied tone, Riku muttered.

“That is fine then.”

Taking away his hand from Riku’s hair, Vrusto gave a broad smile.

The task of stopping Riku if she was to do something suspicious was his, her instructor. However,

“Ah, , Ojou-chan, do you want some frozen sweets? There should be some remaining at the storehouse.”

“Don’t you need to finish reviewing the documents?”

“It’s fine. In the end, I’m pulling all-nighters after all.”

With Vrusto saying that, Riku nodded after a while. Looking at her face from the side, she somewhat looked to be in a good mood.

“Alright, then it is decided!”

While thinking about the taste of the frozen sweets, he hurried to the storehouse. As if Riku also wanted to quickly go eat the frozen sweets, she walked in a faster pace than usual.

Riku hasn’t changed from her normal. Looking at her acting like that, Vrusto was able to feel relieved for the moment.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 69**

# **.THE TIMING TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY**

It was five days until the meeting.

The main street of the demon capital, Taitas, was very tumultuous.

Frowning her eyebrows, major general Keity Foster quietly clicked her tongue.

“Really, even though an important meeting is going to be happening... Now that I think about it, it is too early to be the market day. ...What is happening here?”

Leaning forward her head, Keity put her face out of the window.

It seemed that the demons at the demon capital were all gathering together. Moreover, all of them looked to be standing as if there was something they were waiting for at the end of the street. While whispering to one another, they were leaning forward, waiting for what was going to come. The directions they were looking at were of all the gates of the demon capital.

“What is it? Is somebody coming today?”

“...Well, don't you now? As always, Keity's ability in gathering information falls behind.”

It was possible to hear a high-pitched voice from behind Keity. Turning her head with a moody expression, she could see a girl of small build elegantly sitting there. The hand that held a fan which hid part of her face was slightly covered in leopard fur.

“Fiore Pansah. No matter how much of close friends we are, there are things that can't be said. ...Well, I won't deny that thought.”

“Major general Keity Foster, this attitude of sincerely accepting your mistakes is admirable.”

Fiore hid her smile with her fan.

As a noble, she took part of the center of the politics. She was Keity's best friend that she could trust the most, and was someone that protected Charlotte as well.

“Then, Keity. Who in the world has arrived?”

“That is...”

“Oh, they arrived!”

It was right at the moment Keity opened her mouth. Drowning out her voice, someone in the crowd raised his voice. As if induced by that voice, the crowd bellow her eyes started some kind of uproar. Hurriedly turning her eyes to the gates, she noticed that it should have been about the horse riding group that was going under the gate right at that time.

“That... Is the flag of the third division... Ah, it should be major general Riku.”

Keity crossed her arms as if she was satisfied.

Although Riku Barusak was a human, she actually was a new star, possessing great power. Guessing from her attitude at Derufoi and at the garden party, it seems she had dislike over Charlotte. She didn't like this aspect of her, but because not only had she done a task together with her previously and how both of them were going to be promoted to major general at the same date, she was an existence to pay mind to some extent.

“Ah, such a prominent person. For her to advance at her career so much in only one year... Hey, Fiore, you should also come see her!”

While signing Fiore to come with her hand, Keity turned her eyes to Riku's group.

With the armor of the horses shining, Riku and her soldiers were approaching in an resolute manner. With all of them being of the military, their figure riding on their horses



was fitting.

With her red hair lightly fluttering, her gallant figure advancing through was dignified and didn't lose to the nobles or the other higher-ups of the military. With her single arm, she handled her horse more skillfully than anyone and had at her back a halberd bigger than the stature of her body as if such was only natural.

By one glance, it was more or less possible to understand the reason why Riku Barusak had so young been promoted to major general.

Although the demons that had welcomed her weren't few at the surface, it wouldn't be exaggeration to say that at the demon society strength was what dictated all.

Most of the demons were giving her either a frustrated look, recognizing her capability, or a doubting look, wondering if she was really that strong. Without abuse, they were confirming whether she was a human that was worthy becoming a major general.

However, of course, amongst the crowd...

"The likes of you human! Don't get too cocky!"

"You jumped-up human!" (TL note: Typical Japanese swearing -.-')

There were demons that directly showed their hostility.

However, Riku wouldn't get carried over by something like verbal abuse. On the contrary, she only showed a faint smile.

Perhaps that was the real reason why Riku was able to get this position.

Going along her fifty subordinates, her figure was magnificent in all aspects.

"Ah, very praiseworthy. Don't you think so, Fiore?"

Being asked that by Keity, Fiore also slightly stuck her face outside the window.

Although her mouth was being hidden by her fan, by looking from the side of her face, it seemed that she was thinking about something.

“...That is bad.”

“By saying bad... Is there any problem?”

Puzzled, Keity inclined her neck to the side.

“No matter how I look at it, there are no faults to be ashamed of there.”

“Have you seen the race of her subordinates? ...Those around her are the remains of Zerrik.”

Closing her fan, Fiore pointed to the direction right behind Riku.

Turning her eye to that direction, Keity was able to see that there really were soldiers with the ferocious face of a bear.

“Saamon Makkenji. He was the favored mascot of Zerrik. There were some other people in that crowd too.”

“Does that mean that major general Riku won over Zerrik subordinates?”

Keity’s eyes became slightly bulged out.

It hasn’t been many days since Zerrik’s second division had been absorbed. But even so, Riku had completely won over them and had a bond of trust that was to the point of her bringing them here along with her.

“In other words, it means the same as that girl having her grasp on all the divisions, except for the first one, which is leaded by Charlotte-sama.

By Fiore elegantly opening her fan, a small sound was produced.

“From what you have said before, Riku Barusak had ill feelings about Charlotte-sama, correct? If we let this go by and are attacked by them just like that, we won’t be able to oppose them.”

“Wait a second Fiore. Do you mean that Charlotte-sama would lose?”

“Yes. In a straight fight, she would lose.”

With Fiore’s blunt response, Keity’s face became pale.

“Although we are still in need of conclusive proofs to finish him off, it seems that Gortoberuk also had been secretly meeting with some members of the parliament. Moreover, they were all demons that didn’t have a good impression of Charlotte-sama. ...It seems they plan on doing something in these five days before the meeting.”

“Su-such a thing!”

Keity was trembling.

Most of Charlotte’s personal guards had died at Derufoi, and the sole survivor... Keity, had climbed up in promotions in one go.

For the sake of Charlotte, and also for the sake of her comrades that had died, she needed to pluck up the sprouts of revolt before they germinated. While making a commotion, Keity rushed over to the door.

“Th-there is no way I can let this be. We need to immediately report this to Charlotte-sama!”

“Wait Keity. There is no reason to be blindly running around.”

Fiore held back Keity who was running at her full speed. Being stopped by Fiore’s call, Keity reluctantly stopped her feet.

“Ho-however, for such an important matter...”

“It is obvious that we are reporting this. The problem is not there.”

Raising a sound by closing her fan, Fiore turned her back to the window.

“It is the timing to defeat the enemy. Didn’t you learn of this important thing at the military academy?”

“That.. is right.”

“It is at the meeting that they are planning on making their moves... In other words, after five days. Looking at it in another perspective, it means that they can’t be acting too showy until then. And so, since this can easily be solved by denouncing them once they cause the trouble at the meeting, isn’t it better to have more cards to drive them into a corner?”

“...Indeed, an excellent view of the situation.”

Agreeing to Fiore, Keity sat down on a chair nearby.

“However, do we have chances on winning?”

“The demons Gortoberuk had secretly talked to were only ten. Other than that, there were only two times that Gortoberuk had left their residence with a smile. Besides, even if they have most of the army on their grasp, because of losses of generals in the recent wars, the only ones of the army that will be able to participate at the meeting are major general Barusak, you... and also Gortoberuk; only the three of you. In other words, it is ninety six versus four. Even if saying that Gortoberuk was able to gather those ten people as allies, it would still be eighty six versus fourteen. It would be an overwhelming victory for us.”  
(TL note: Bad bad math... It should have been twelve! Well, but maybe she is talking about adding more ten people rather than talking about the situation which Gortoberuk was able to win over those ten people he had talked to.)

But as if there was more to be added, Fiore continued her words in an composed tone.

“But I have one worry... In case they are really intending on dethroning Charlotte-sama,

then who are they planning to having the throne assumed after that?”

“It would be someone of the dragon lineage...”

“There would be no meaning to dethroning Charlotte-sama in that case.”

While tapping the closed fan on her hand, Fiore answered.

“To begin with, the demon race is dictated by strength. That was the same for the selection of the Demon Lord. It is seen that just because the dragons had far-off much more power than the other demons, their heritage will be the one to govern. But even if it is anyone else, as long as it is someone that has been acknowledged of being strong, it would be fine even if that person’s body didn’t have the features of a dragon. ”

At the present, except for Charlotte and Leivein, demons which had features of dragons were all in a decline of strength. It was hard to believe that everyone would follow if someone of that same race assumed the throne.

“Therefore, the only other person worthy of that... Ah!”

In the back of Keity’s mind, the face of one person surfaced.

Someone that had unparalleled strength in the Demon Lord army and had many followers; there was only one person like that.

“C-could it be...”

With Keity muttering that, Fiore’s wrinkles that were between her eyebrows deepened.

“...It seems you got it. Yes... I think Riku Barusak is planning on having herself become the next provisional demon lord. ”

Riku Barusak was planning on becoming a provisional demon lord.

There was no way a human could become a provisional demon lord. However, thinking

about the terrifying speed she advanced through the promotions, and then, after judging on how Zerrik's subordinates were obediently following her, perhaps it would be possible.

“There is no way we can forgive such a thing! We must absolutely prevent this!”

“...It is fine as long as you understand it.”

Fiore showed a smile while fanning herself with her fan.

“In these next five days, we will be making our own moves over the meeting. First of all... we will prevent more nobles from changing their sides than they already did.”

“Yes! We will definitely stop them!”

Keity and Fiore held each other's hands. Everything was for the sake of protecting Charlotte, the provisional demon lord.

There were five days until the meeting that was going to be held early in the afternoon.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 70**

# .NEW CHESS PIECE

“So hot!!”

Right after Riku entered the room she had been assigned to, she took out the smiling mask that had been stuck to her face for about one whole day.

Brashly taking off the first division's brooch, and even the second army's, she fell onto the bed just like that. Her military uniform became wrinkled, but she didn't care about something trivial as that.

It had already been two days since she departed from Myuuz.

Until she arrived at Taitas, she took more or less one entire day riding her horse without resting, and ever since she got to the demon capital, she got greeted by demons of renowned families and got dragged into welcome parties, and so, she was completely exhausted.

Of course, in response to that, she would receive them in a open attitude as much as she could; she was okay at changing herself to look a bit intimidating. Although she had been behaving herself in a manner different from her usual until now, it wasn't like she was particularly good at it.(TL note: Yes, that ; sentence is really just like that. It is weird in English, but it is how it was written in Japanese.)

In either case, it was a pain in the ass.

“...It is much easier to swing my halberd around at the battlefield. I can't understand the fellows that like those kind of things.”

Sighing, Riku sank her face into the pillow.

It seemed this exhaustion was weighing down onto Riku's body. She understood the connection the fame she acquired at those welcome parties had with her next moves. Each second was important; relaxing was not allowed. Even though she was tired of it, she



could only brace herself.

“Haa, what are you doing, ojou-chan.”

As Riku was enjoying the softness of the pillow, she heard Vrusto’s big sigh from behind her. Slowly rising her face, she felt she was about to lock Vrusto out of the room.

“...Ojou-chan, treat your uniform with more care. That uniform is a newly made one, isn’t it?”

Vrusto let out complaints from his mouth.

While hugging the pillow with her single arm, Riku glared at Vrusto.

“I still have another new uniform at my bag, so it isn’t a big deal to have it wrinkle a bit. Besides, right now, resting has the priority.”

“Well, this might be the case... That said, I actually needed to be giving you my report first.”

Riku received a letter from Vrusto. The parchment that was elegantly stamped with a wax seal didn’t have the name of the sender written on it. Instead of that, it had a feather of a black crow on it. Taking the black feather, Riku quietly narrowed her eyes.

“The wings of a crow... It should be a letter from Karula Fezah of the fourth division.”

Riku thought back about the bird shaped demon messenger that had come to Sherr island. She was one of Leivein’s subordinates, and so, was a demon soldier closer to Riku than to Charlotte. Right now, Riku was having her show her capability as a messenger in place of Roppu, who she had left at Myuuz in case an emergency happened.

“Yes, it arrived at the time ojou-chan was still talking to the nobles.”

“You should have handed it over sooner.”

“Stupid, I didn’t have the opportunity.”

After glaring at Vrusto for a bit more, she put the pillow aside and broke the seal of the letter. And then, she looked down at the text that had been smoothly organized. The more Riku kept reading, the more her frown became deeper. Right at the time the wrinkles aggravated to the point that it felt as if it wouldn’t go back to normal no matter how much she stretched her forehead, Riku finally raised her face.

“...Apparently, they perceived our movements.”

Dejected, Riku dropped her shoulders.

Riku and Gortoberuk didn’t believe that the Charlotte’s side wouldn’t discover their actions before their uprising started. However, even if they were discovered, it should have been about tomorrow’s night that their suspicions would start. If Riku were to do a wrong move now, she would need to change the plans. With that said, it was difficult for Riku to directly meet with Gortoberuk. Both Riku and Gortoberuk had their schedules tight. They needed to agree on a time where both of them could meet each other with just the two of them alone.

Right when they had just finally found a convenient time for both of them, Charlotte ended up perceiving they were planning an uprising, and so, it wouldn’t be exaggeration to say that Charlotte was now looking out for Riku’s and Gortoberuk’s actions.

Since it became like that, they needed to adapt, bit by bit changing their movements by themselves as they execute the original plan.

While letting out a sigh, Riku glanced through the [list of demons that needs special attention] which was included in the letter sent by Karula.

“Keity Foster... Ah, that macho woman. As long as I am careful about her power, it should be fine. Now then, the real problem is that... Fiore Pansah, but... Vrusto, do you know her?”

Right after Riku brought up the subject, Vrusto’s eyes became wide-open in surprise.

“Haa? Don’t you know, ojou-chan!?”

“I don’t know. I’ve been only focusing on the battles until now after all.”

With Riku responding with those words, exhausted, Vrusto put his hand onto his forehead. While muttering something in the lines of “I shouldn’t have taught her only about fighting, but also more about the common sense of the demons”, Vrusto shook his head frustrated.

“You see, the Pansah family is a noble family that has great authority even at the parliament. In particular, Fiore is known for controlling the parliament as Charlotte’s right hand. She can be a reliable person if she is your ally, but if you make her your enemy, she is a terrifying girl to the point that you can’t even look at her in the eyes.”(TL note: At the sentence where the parliament is mentioned->シャルロツテの右腕として時代の議会を率いていく若手って知られてる<-, there is this時代の. I guess it is referring that the parliament is recent to the era, but it might also be something else. Either way, I couldn’t think of a way to fit this into the sentence without making it completely weird.)

Vrusto suddenly had a slight tremble. It seemed that his fuzzy fur stood up somewhat.

With a snort, Riku started to think. From what she saw from Vrusto’s reaction, it looked like she had made an outrageous enemy.

...If she gave up now, because she still haven’t done anything, perhaps she would be able to escape punishment. However, there is no mistake that the position she had been building up until now would crumble down in an instant. But this was only the best possible ending, and there was no doubts that her moves would become restricted since she would be monitored as the person who was the mastermind of this uprising. The chances of her being able to fight alongside Leivein once he wakes up would decrease considerably. Only that she needed to avoid.

“I don’t know what mess ojou-chan is planning on doing, but it seems that they got you at the palm of their hand. You should stop doing this kind of reckless thing and give up now.”

Vrusto still didn’t completely recognize Charlotte as the enemy. Riku trusted Vrusto, but there were exceptions to that. Riku decided to make it so she didn’t trust him for now.

“Not really. I am not planning on doing anything.”

While spinning the black feather she was holding with her left hand, Riku started to think of counter measures.

However, no matter how much she would think about that, without being able to have any good ideas, the time simply passed. Now that it became like this, she couldn't help but think that she should have gone with the assassination, which was her last resort plan. If she concealed herself in the darkness of the night that was as black as Karula wings, she would be able to easily assassinate Charlotte.

When she started thinking of that, suddenly... Riku remembered a certain incident.

“Now that I think about it... Charlotte had her own messenger squad, right?”

With a quiet voice, Riku decided to ask that to Vrusto. As she did that, Vrusto made a sour face.

“Yes, she does.”

“There was one person from that squad at the garden party, right? If I remember correctly, her name should be Mei Asuteroid.”

Riku gave a try on pursuing this matter.

If Riku's memories were correct, the messenger that had picked up the information about the Demon Lord crown had a name like that. Although it was impossible for her to forgive Charlotte for sending them to Sherr island without confirming whether the information was correct, Mei Asuteroid, who to begin with had been made to gather false information, was also a target of hatred. If she weren't convinced about the false information, she would have definitely been able to confirm the credibility of a rumor of this level.

However, the reality was that she wasn't able to do that and had been tricked by the spiritualist side.

Something like being manipulated by the spiritualists is not forgivable. Just by thinking back about it made Riku angry.

“Yes, Mei Asuteroid. That guy that adds “nya” at the end of her sentences, right?”

“Yes. Is she your relative?”

If Riku’s memories were not mistaken, her face was clearly one of a wolf. And adding to that, the surname she named herself with was the same [Asuteroid]. With that, it was impossible for Vrusto to say that she was unrelated to him. Rather, her being unrelated is what it would be weird.

Being asked that by Riku, Vrusto nodded with a moodiness of the bottom of his heart.

“Yes. Rather than just relatives or anything, she is actually my younger sister.”

“Younger sister? Did Vrusto have a younger sister?”

“Something like a younger sister, of course I would have. Then, what about her? I don’t know much about her.”

Vrusto declared in an unusually casual way. It was the first time the word [sister] came from Vrusto’s mouth in these ten years Riku had gone through with Vrusto. Perhaps, he didn’t have a good relationship with his sister. To say the least, there were no doubts that regardless whether they were on good or bad terms, Vrusto was distant to his sister.

While making this assumption, Riku gave a complacent smile. Whether it was that the muscles of her face were stiffen because of how she had kept showing a smile during the whole day or because of some other reason, Riku didn’t know, but she was able to easily show a smile.

“I see, you had a sister then.”

To say the least about how she served Charlotte in her messenger squad, Riku didn’t want to believe that a demon that would be caught up by a false information would be Vrusto’s younger sister, and she didn’t want to use such a demon girl that had nothing in her head, but it was out of Riku’s expectations that the situation would develop into her current one.

“Could you introduce your sister to me? Since we came to the demon capital anyway, I

think it should be fine if we went to meet her.”(TL note: Just by saying introduce gives the feeling that it is just about Vrusto talking about his sister instead of going to where she is and introduce her to Riku. I couldn’t think of better words so that I could have properly this message across.”

Riku would use anyone she could use.

Even if Riku was working together with Gortoberuk, he had less capable people and less money than Charlotte. In that case, she should use anyone she could. Even if that one was clearly the enemy, she would use the person as her chess piece.

Riku’s heart was secretly jumping around for the appearance of this new chess piece.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 71**

# **.SECRET TALK**

Riku had never seen a bar as clean as that.

When she followed after Vrusto inside the shop, Riku became slightly surprised.

Riku thought that bars were the same anywhere. At the time she was at the Dragon Demon division, being convinced by Vrusto, she had went into a bar at the outskirts of the business district. Because of that, her image of a bar became of a sultry, noisy and sweat stinking place.

However, the bar at the demon capital was different.

In there, it was a quiet and dimly dark place that illuminated by a big lamp. Of course there was the smell of alcohol, but it wasn't to the point that it hindered the breathing.

“...Welcome.”

The old man who was sitting at the corner of the shop slowly stood up. It seemed that he was a waiter at the shop.

Taking out the introductory letter of the Gortoberuk house from her breast pocket, Riku gave it to the waiter. Giving a slight glance at the letter, the waiter gave a deep nod.

“Riku Barusak-sama, correct? I have been informed by Edgar-sama. Please, this way.”

With gestures full of etiquette, the old man guided them through the shop.

The two of them were lead to a place where there had many small rooms lined up next to one another that looked like caves. However, there were no signs that there was anyone in any of the rooms. Opening up the bamboo mat that was at the entrance, it could be seen that a table and chairs were already prepared there. Perhaps it was because they were told in advance about the time she would arrive. On the polished table, there were simple



snacks and drinks laying there. (TL note: Does anyone know what ->土洞<- is? I couldn't find anything on google, and looking at it individually, it would be literally earth caves (caves made of earth?), but it feels kind of weird for it to be it.)

“As to be expected of the bar managed by the Gortoberuk house. So fancy.”

Vrusto let out a whistle.

Nodding to Vrusto's words, Riku turned her eyes back to the waiter.

“After that, another person will be coming. Please, let that person enter in that room.”

With Riku vaguely pointing to the room at the right, the waiter politely acknowledged, saying “Certainly”. And then, he quietly left.

“...I will leave the rest to you, second lieutenant Vrusto”

“Yes, yes.”

While rotating his shoulder, Vrusto went into the room at the right side.

As to confirm the room, Riku went under the bamboo mat of the room of the left side. The table of the room too had water and a light meal made of some sort of beans prepared. While wondering whether this would also be included in the payment, Riku held the glass laying there. It seemed like the water had been recently refrigerated; the surface of the glass had many water drops stuck onto it.

“...Cold.”

The demon capital was covered by mist for the whole year, but even so, it was as humid as when it was summer.

The well refrigerated water moistened Riku's throat. While she had been enjoying the water, Riku noticed someone's footsteps. Stopping her movement, Riku focused all her senses onto her ears.

Step by step, someone was approaching. There were two different sounds of footsteps.

“Please, this way.”

Riku heard the voice of that waiter from a bit ago.

In the end, one of the footsteps were of the waiter. Since that was the case, it makes it inevitable that the other footsteps were of a [client].

“Thank you-nya.”

Thanking the waiter, this certain client went under the bamboo mat. At that same time, Riku heard the sound of Vrusto standing up at the neighboring room at the right side.

“It has been a long time, Mei.”

“Vrusto-ani, you are still the same-nya.”

Considering only the words that were being used, perhaps one might make an assumption that this would become a heartwarming conversation.

However, reality was different. There were no feelings put into neither Vrusto’s nor Mei’s voices. It seemed that it was the truth they weren’t in good terms.

“For you to suddenly call me, what is it-nya?”

“What, although it was due to work, I came to the demon capital. Since I came here anyway, I thought about having a look at my little sister’s face.”

The sound of the chair being dragged was heard.

“...Even though you abandoned the heirship to the Asuteroid house, only now are you acting like a brother-nya?”

Mei's tone of voice went down by one level.

However, as if not caring about this, Vrusto said.

“Stupid. I didn't abandon it or anything. To begin with, it was me that was at the bottom of the succession line. Now, sit down already.”

“...Well, since this is a bar famed for being good, I can tolerate your brother-like acting for today.”

In place of the aggressiveness from a few seconds ago, Mei answered with a bright and innocent tone of voice. Her voice when she was making her order of some kind of food seemed to be somewhat happy. While carrying the bean like food to inside her mouth, Riku concentrated all her nerves onto the conversation that was happening at the room next to her. Without stop, their conversation continued for some time. However, this went on only for about an hour.

“Now that I think about it, isn't Vrusto-ani close to your boss-nya? You are said to be Riku Barusak's right hand, you know?”

Right now, for the first time, a topic related to Riku appeared.

“Hm? Yes, it is only a work relationship, you know.”

Vrusto gave the answer that had been planned beforehand.

As if she was satisfied with the answer, Mei made a purring sound.

“Is that true-nya?”

“Stupid. Why would I be lying. Then, what there is about it?”

“Well... Yes, I actually have something I want to discuss with Vrusto-ani.”

Mei lowered down her voice. The mood in the room changed by a bit. The happy mood from a while ago completely changed, and now a silent and cold mood wafted around there. From then on, it would be the main act. Riku swallowed saliva.

“It seems that Riku Barusak is planning on causing a revolution against Charlotte-sama - nya.”

“Haa? Revolution?”

The sound of Vrusto suddenly standing up in a loud manner was heard.

It wasn't impossible that he didn't know about those things. To begin with, Riku didn't tell Vrusto that she was planning on having a rebellion.

The pretext Riku was using to have Vrusto call Mei was that [she wanted to greet Vrusto's sister].

In that case, why was she secretly eavesdropping them right now? Of course, the truth is that it was for the sake of getting hold of Mei Asuteroid's weakness, but for the moment, Riku told Vrusto that [it was so that she could surprise his younger sister].

...Riku was doubtful about to what point Vrusto was doing this seriously, though.

“I didn't hear anything about that, you know?”

“But Keity-san and Fiore-san had said so-nya.”

“...Well, although ojou-chan surely hates the provisional demon lord Charlotte-sama, as to be expected... No, is it... really possible?”

“Didn't you know-nya?”

Vrusto was confused.

Mei, who had saw this reaction, was perplexed somewhere. She couldn't have expected

that her brother, who is known to be [Riku Barusak's right hand] by the society, to not know anything about Riku's plans of revolting.

"Yes, I don't know. It is the first time I heard about that. What is this about, ojou-chan!?"

Vrusto raised his voice.

Eight or nine out of ten, he was actually asking this to Riku, who was hidden at the room next to theirs, but it seemed that Mei did not perceive it in that way. Lowering down their voice more and more, they continued their conversation as if they were whispering.

"In that case, Vrusto-ani. I... would like to join our hands for this time-nya."

"Haa? Hands?"

"I would like Vrusto-ani to get hold of Riku's Barusak weakness-nya. After that, while you are at it, I would like you to track her movements-nya. Then, I would put all of it into a report, and once I present it to Charlotte-sama, us, brother and sister, will get promoted without doubt-nya!!"

Mei let out enticing words.

Vrusto didn't answer. He only kept silent without even any signs of movement. Once Riku put the last grain in her mouth, she stood up from her seat.

"What will you do, Vrusto-ani?"

"...That... That's right. What will you do, ojou-chan?"

As if those words were the signal, Riku went through the bamboo mat of the room.

Differently from Riku's room, the table of this room was crowded with varied cuisines. The ones who were seated around the table was Vrusto, who had his arms crossed in a proud manner, and one more person... A girl that had short brown hair wrapped up by two scrunchies was sitting there. It seemed that the girl... Mei Asuteroid, could not hide her surprise for Riku having suddenly appeared.

“Nya, nya, nyah! Why is Riku Barusak here-nyah!!”

The way Mei was trembling with her eyes wide-open as much as they could be was comical. While leaking out a smile, Riku slowly walked over to Mei.

“I am your brother’s superior. Is there any problems for me to be near my subordinate?”

Mei tried to go through the exit of the small room, but it was a small and narrow room. No matter how much she was a member of the fast-footed messenger squad, without being able to dash out, Mei had her head grasped by Riku.

“More importantly, it seems that a very rude rumor has been spreading. A rumor saying that I am planning on causing a revolt, or something.”

“I-it was the truth! Yo-yo-you criminal!!”

Mei was posing to be strong with all she had, but even so, her fluffy tail was between her legs. Riku could only see all this as a bluff.

“Indeed, I hate Charlotte. However... Isn’t this jumping over conclusions a little too much?”

“S-something like this...”

“For me to be having plans of revolting... Such blasphemy.

Although Riku was thinking of making a revolution, she still didn’t make it public.

“Shut up-nya! Even though you are planning on killing Charlotte-sama!”

“There is no way I would kill her.”

She wanted to add [for the present time] in what she had said, but she decided not to say this. Putting strength in the hand that was holding Mei's head, Riku approached her mouth near her ears.

"My position is of a major general. You are a first lieutenant. ....By the military regulations, this would be defamation of a superior officer. The result for that... It was death sentence, wasn't it, first lieutenant Mei Asuteroid?"

"U-uu."

On Mei's eyes, tears were faintly showing up.

Soon enough, it would be the ideal time. While having a snickering smile, Riku sent a signal to Vrusto with her eyes. Picking up the signal, Vrusto shrugged his shoulders.

"...Don't bully her too much, ojou-chan. One way or another, she is still my little sister."

Muttering those words as if he was spitting them, Vrusto left the room.

After confirming that Vrusto's presence had completely vanished, Riku threw Mei deeper into the room. Mei crashed into a chair in a dashing way and crumbled down right at the place. Perhaps, most of Mei's fighting spirit faded away because of that. Standing up, Mei's legs trembled as if she was a fawn that had just been born.

However, as if she was still planning on running away, her eyes were looking straight at the exit.

"Now then, there are no hindrances. Now, shall we have a good talk, first lieutenant Mei Asuteroid?"

There was no way Riku would let her new chess piece run away that easily.

Sitting down in front of the exit, Riku looked at Mei with a smile that had no comparison.

"I have a little favor I would like you do."

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 72**



# STUPITIDY

“Well, I won’t make it difficult for you. You may calm down.”

While dexterously handling the glass with her single hand, Riku showed a smile.

Riku’s tone of voice was very gentle and her expression was calm. The change was to the point that people like Vrusto who knew how Riku was at the battlefield wouldn’t recognize her.

This made Riku look even scarier.

Mei Asuteroid was trembling while clinging to the wall farthest from the entrance. Riku had lost one of her arms on the battle from a few days ago. For her to be holding a glass of tea, it meant that she would inevitably not be holding her halbeld, which was now right beside to her. If Mei was to run away at full speed right now, perhaps she would be able to get away from Riku, who had her guard lowered.

However, she couldn’t do it.

“What’s the matter, Mei Asuteroid? Don’t take it so seriously.”

“Ye-yes.”

Although Mei had answered that to Riku, Mei shrank up her body even more.

Riku’s expression, behavior and tone of voice were all like ones of a mild girl, but all of that was negated by the aura that was overflowing from her. This was the killing intent Riku had been cultivating throughout the battlefields, or perhaps, it was her own personality.

Even though Mei had seen there might have been a possibility for her to run away, she realized that it was impossible in reality. In the instant she gives one step forward to run

away, or rather, the instant she seems like she was going to run away, Riku would definitely take her halberd to hand.

That was why Mei was silently curling herself up. And so while fearing what Riku was going to do to her next, what she was going to tell her to do...

“As I said, there is no reason for you to be that much scared. It is not like I am going to be tearing your limbs one by one, you see.”

“Ah, uh, i-i- in that case, what... what am I supposed to tell y-you-nya?”

“...Haa, relax a little. Really, differently from your brother, you have no enthusiasm.”

Riku let out a small sigh.

Even if Mei had been caught by the enemy faction, was there even any reason for her to be scared to that point? Riku knew that Mei was a bit shaken by how she got exposed asking Vrusto to spy on Riku. But even so, she was too scared even for that case. She had a too weak of an attitude.

With Riku putting the glass onto the table, a thud sound was raised. And then, the room fell in silence.

“I will say it one more time: I am not planning on killing the provisional demon lord. That is just the other demons overthinking too much.”

“...Is that true-nya?”

Mei slightly narrowed her eyes. Those eyes were one didn't believe in what Riku was saying. It was as if they were filled with suspicion.

“Yes, it is the truth. Even if I kill the provisional demon lord, nothing will be solved.”

Putting emphasis onto the [nothing will be solved], Riku opened her hand.(TL note: By saying “opening your hand”, what would be better to use here?)

If it was by Riku's true feelings, she wanted to kill Charlotte. She wanted to cut Charlotte, who had made her beloved Leivein fall in a state of coma, into pieces.

But right at the current phase of the plan, she mustn't declare this to the public. Riku understood this very well.

"Now, Mei Asuteroid, I have a question for you. Is the one who uses you the provisional demon lord? Or perhaps Keity? Or could it be that demon called Fiore?"

"Th-that, I can't say-nya. It's out of my authority-nya!"

While shaking her head, Mei showed her opposition to the question. At a glance, she was completely scared off, but it seems that she still knew what shouldn't be talked about.

"I see, that's a shame."

While slightly raising the corners of her mouth, Riku once again picked up the glass. Calmly waving it, while looking at her own face reflected at the surface of the tea that was inside it, she firmly declared.

"In that case, tell your owner this: [Making your moves without evidence is just stupidity]. At least come again after picking up some proofs."

—

"I see. And after that, you pulled back, right?"

While hiding her lips with her fan, Fiore spoke with scorn.

Near her feet, Mei was curled up. Fiore had her heart bouncing, thinking that she was now going to hear theirs from Mei, but what she had heard was something that it wasn't exaggeration to consider an insult to her.

“It seems you were completely done in. Even though she is just a human, for her to be acting so concei...”

Fiore bit her tongue.

They had finally captured a human from royalty and were one step from their desired resurrection of the Demon Lord. However, as to be expected, since they dragged in someone from royalty, it was inevitable that the humans would come with full force in order to take the royalty human back. In those recent years, the demon side had got a slight advantage, but in the end, they were still weak against the demon banning power, and it wouldn't be weird if their chess table was overturned anytime. Despite how they needed to urgently proceed with the resurrection of the Demon Lord, a factional dispute inside the Demon Lord army sprang up.

Fiore couldn't imagine even in dreams that she would be under such a situation of extreme instability at lost because of [an outsider that could possibly assassinate the provisional demon lord Charlotte].

“Have you reported this to Charlotte-sama?”

With Fiore asking her that, while still standing, Mei hesitantly nodded. (TL note: Wasn't she curled up at Fiore's feet? →→)

“Yes. I went to report her about what happened, and I came here after that.”

“...So that was why you were late to report, right?”

Fiore let out a small sigh.

It was the day before yesterday that Fiore used Charlotte's name and ordered Mei to draw out information from Riku Barusak's adjutant. Even though she had made contact with the adjutant at the night of that day, actually only at the night of the next day had she come to report. Fiore was starting to become irritated about the delay, but if she was late became she went to report to Charlotte, it couldn't be helped. (TL note: I am kind of unsure about the way経由 is used here ->メイにシャルロットで「リク・バルサクの副官から情報を引き出して来い」と命令したのは、一昨日のことだ<- It gives the feeling that Fiore used Charlotte's name in order to give Mei the order... But in that case,

I think people would phrase it up in another way instead of using 経由. From the context, it is most likely that she used Charlotte's name, but oh well....)

“...Charlotte-sama doesn't have much sense of danger after all. So once again you put off reporting to me?”(TL note: I am also unsure about this one ->また、報告を後回しにされました？<-)

“...I am sorry.”

“I don't mind about this. There is only one day until the meeting though... Now, how should I cook that little girl.”

While lightly fanning herself with her fan, Fiore started to think.

The best method to deal with all this was to kill Riku Barusak. Right now, the pillar of the anti-Charlotte faction was nobody but Riku, who had raised enormous achievements recently. In other words, if she was to die, their unity would crumble. However, Fiore couldn't think of someone that would be capable of assassinating her.

“I will ask you again. Despite Riku Barusak having lost one of her arms, you couldn't even get close to her?”

“Y-yes. It is extremely regrettable, but... I couldn't see any chances of victory...”

Mei must be thinking back about what happened at that time. Having a sudden shaking, her body became even more curled up. Even her face seemed to be getting pale.

Mei's official position was at the [messenger squad], but most of her jobs were actually shady work like espionage and assassination. Even among those, Mei was the elite of elites; there was nobody superior to her in assassinating big-shot demons. Even Charlotte and Fiore highly valued Mei Asuteroid as an assassin. Someone like Mei had accepted her defeat against Riku Barusak, declaring [she couldn't do anything against her] just by confronting her.

Fiore could imagine that even if she sent other assassins to Riku Barusak, the same results would happen.

“Is that so.”

Closing her fan, Fiore started to lightly tap it at her own palm.

Unless they poison her, Riku Barusak won't die. Riku's side should also be vigilant about that. In that case, the only method of killing her was limited to having her executed with the [crime of revolting against the provisional demon lord Charlotte].

It was well known that Riku Barusak disliked the provisional demon lord Charlotte. However, this was not enough to tie together that Riku was plotting Charlotte's death. In order to have that, Fiore thought about using Mei and drawing out information from Riku's adjutant, but...

“It seems that it went contrary to our expectations.”

“...I am very sorry.”

“I am not really angry, you see.”

Without looking to Mei's direction, Fiore answered in an indifferent manner.

Even though her methods were limited, there were still ways to defeat Riku remaining. When the time comes, Fiore could use her authority and have Riku lose her standing at the meeting. Fiore didn't think she would lose in an argument against someone that was raised in the battlefield.

But even so, she only had one day remaining until the meeting.

Focusing her mind, Fiore spoke.

“But there might still be unexpected occurrences... Don't loose up on the vigilance and continuously keep track of Riku Barusak. I will be continuing to gather evidence.”

“Ha!!”

Responding to Fiore full of vigor, Mei was about to open the door and rush out from the room, but suddenly noticing something, she stopped her feet.

“Go quickly, Asuteroid. What are you wasting time for...?”

“Sorry for coming this late at night, Mei Asuteroid’s owner.”

What surfaced from the darkness was a red hair that would stand out even at the night.

From the faint light, a girl that didn’t have one of her arms showed a smile to Fiore.

—

One day has passed since that certain girl had come to talk to Fiore.

Now, coming back to the scene of the meeting that was thrown into a swirl of chaos.

“I... would like to propose the dismissal of the provisional demon lord Charlotte Demonz.”

The moment Riku’s words became, the meeting became wrapped up in uproar in an instant.

If one was to compare it to something, the turmoil was as if someone had put a nest of bees there. The demons that didn’t know about that sudden explosive declaration... No, even to the ones that knew about it, most of the demons couldn’t hide their agitation and were moving about in confusion.

While Riku was silently hearing all their voices, and Charlotte’s eyes became wide-open and she became petrified.

Riku had been preparing for this in these eight days. Now, it would be the turning point of the match where she would use all her card she had been collecting until now.

“Riku Barusak... What are you thinking.”

“It is just like I had said, provisional demon lord. No, Charlotte Demonz.”

With the newcomer of the meeting to throwing away the honorifics of the provisional demon lord, the repercussions of the meeting increased.

However, there was no hesitation in Riku’s eyes. Imposingly straightening her back, she once again... in order to make Charlotte and the other demons once again understand what she was talking about, she spoke something even more daring.

“I will put an end to her reign right here.”



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 73**

# 73.RESPONSIBILITY

“You are being disrespectful, Riku Barusak!!”

The one to launch an objection before anyone else was a demon of a large build.

The tiger shaped female demon that was toned with muscles, major general Keity Foster, was glaring straight at Riku. Differently from Charlotte’s confused attitude, Keity was clearly showing her hostility to Riku.

“You are saying that Charlotte-sama’s reign will be over!? More than that, for you to address Charlotte-sama without honorifics... You.. This is defamation of your superior! It seems that you really want to be killed that much, Riku Barusak!”

Raising a sound, she stood up in a flashy manner and pointed her sharp claws at Riku. The anger that was emanating from Keity was just like hell fire. It was an intensity gave the feeling that just by approaching even if one step towards Keity, one would become ashes and vanish.

Facing that, Riku kept her smile.(TL note: Actually, it is written細く笑った, but I couldn’t find what a細く smile means. Either way, it is a smile^^)

“As you would guess, I still don’t want to die.”

Without raising any sound, Riku stood up. And then, her eyes met the eyes of the furious Keity.

“Besides, there is no reason for me to be killed. This is a proposal for the meeting. Wouldn’t it be unnatural if you were to decide that all this is an insult without even knowing the what it is about?”

Riku spoke calmly. As if Riku’s carefree figure was pouring oil onto Keity’s hellfire of anger, having her eyes becoming bloodshot, Keity bent her back as if she was about to jump at Riku.

“Riku Barusak, you...!”

“Keity, drop it.”

However, using her hand, Charlotte commanded Keity. She had only raised one of her hands, but even so, it seemed that just that was enough to stop Keity. While letting out a groan from the gaps of her clenched teeth, dejected, Keity pulled back.

“The major general Riku Barusak is a newcomer from the military. She isn’t used to a place like this, and so, it would be obvious that she wouldn’t know how she should behave. As long as you are careful from now on, there won’t be any problems.”

While saying that, Charlotte elegantly opened her fan.

It seemed that Charlotte was thinking of solving this by making Riku’s proposal [as if it didn’t happen].

“Now then, everything is fine now. Major general Riku Barusak is a talented person that will be indispensable for the Demon Lord army from now on; it is fine as long as you learn from your mistakes. Umu, is that understood?”

Charlotte persuaded.

Charlotte was showing a smile that seemed to be saying [with that, everything is fine now]. Maybe this was because she didn’t want to throw away Riku’s fighting prowess, or because she was intending to repay the debt she had to Riku, or perhaps both. Showing a smile as if saying she had accepted what Charlotte had said, Riku...

“Yes, indeed I am an inexperienced novice that still has much to learn. However, I intend on (TL note: I think this was supposed to be *あおい若輩者* instead of *おおい若輩者*.)

Riku bluntly declared.

If Riku was someone that would back down now just because Charlotte had said to, she wouldn’t set a stage at the risk of her head. Riku wasn’t holding her halberd, but she felt

that this was just like the battlefield. It could be said that the conditions for victory was taking the head of the enemy general. The enemy general was Charlotte, and the ones stopping Riku from taking it was the Charlotte's safeguarding faction that was started by Keity Foster.

"I believe Charlotte-sama's actions in the past few months has somewhat not been restrained enough."

"Restrained?"

Charlotte's forehead twitched.(TL note: It is actually the temple of the head ->こめかみが<-, but... It just feels to weird in english... Charlotte's temple of the head twitched.)

"What do you mean by that?"

"For instance, because of the deployment of army to Sherr island without proper investigations, we fell into the trap of the enemy. At that time, if things were handled more carefully, at least general Zerrik wouldn't have been killed."

With Riku saying that, the surroundings became slightly noisy.

There were many demons that were unsatisfied with Zerrik's incident. At best, there would always be insufficient soldiers. In order to fight the spiritualists, it is necessary to expand the army in a large scale. However, because of that, most of the young demons are part of the military. From the rumors, it is heard that there aren't enough young demons even at the demon capital. Even children from the nobles, including their heirs, are enlisted into the army, and even Riku sees demons of noble families at the squad she leads from time to time. In other words, there were also nobles among the ones that were killed at the city of Fert.(TL note: ゼーリックの件に関しては、不満を持っている魔族が多い。ただでさえ、->魔族の数は少ない。<-(??))

Riku didn't know about the pride of the demon nobles, but this didn't change the fact that their previous children had died. And so, it was stranger for them to not be unsatisfied about Charlotte's reign.

"It is an obvious principle that, even if it is by only one hour sooner, it is necessary to recover the Demon Lord crown fast if there is a chance to have it."

In response to that, Charlotte declared with an indifferent expression.

“If it is for the sake of not letting the humans use it, it is not unnatural to favor quickly recovering it.”

“It should still be necessary to confirm the veracity of the information. Guessing from Mei Asuteroid’s behavior, that information was one she had just got her hands on at the time. Wouldn’t it be fine even if you didn’t give your immediate response to it?”

It was at the garden party that was being held by Charlotte that the information regarding the Demon Lord crown arrived. Without pondering about it at all, Charlotte had decidedly given her order in regard to the information that had suddenly appeared. That was not the decision of someone that governs a kingdom.

“...Indeed...”

A person in the crowd muttered.

Influential demons had been invited to that garden party. Demons that had the standing to be called for this meeting definitely had been invited to that garden party. That was why everyone here had seen Charlotte’s decision.

For how the decision that had led a division of demons to fall near annihilation had been carried out without even the slightest consideration... Every demon gathered here knew about it.

Wasn’t Charlotte’s decision wrong? Such thoughts started to color the members of the parliament.

“You are basing all this on how the outcome was!”

Declaring that, Keity let out a roaring voice.

“Indeed, it is important to have the most consideration in decisions. However, Riku Barusak... You should be able to understand that the situation in battle is always constantly changing. At that time, the [Demon Lord crown] was an important object that would influence the situation of the war. If we had found it at that time, it is inevitable that

for it to have happened, it would have required a quick decision.”

Keity’s words echoed through the whole meeting room like the roar of a tiger.

As if they were oppressed by Keity’s voice, the doubting voices became quieter.

“Is it just because the war ended up in defeat that you are putting the responsibility onto Charlotte-sama!? Enough with jokes!”

Riku listened to Keity’s argument.

Certainly, Keity’s statements might not have been wrong. However, there was no way Riku could accept them.

“Then, who is supposed to take responsibility?”

As if she was parrying the attack of the enemy with her halberd, Riku bluntly spoke.

“It is the duty of the person in charge to take responsibility when the time comes, isn’t it?”

“If it is about it, then Zerrik and you, who were the commanders at that battle, are the ones that should actually take responsibility. You didn’t notice the a trap after all.”

Without hesitations, Keity imposingly answered back. And then, showering Riku with words, she continued.

“To be able to react to dire situations is what makes a first-rate commander. You, who wasn’t able to do that, was supposed to be demoted for that in the regulations! Just because Charlotte-sama’s compassion that...”

“I will answer back those words just the way you said. I can tell that this leader of the Demon Lord army won’t be able to respond to a dire situation in the future.”

“You are being too disrespectful, Riku Barusak! This is only because you still don’t know of Charlotte-sama’s strength!”

“Strength? Pf, aha, ahahahahaaha!”

At that moment, Riku could not hold herself back from laughing in the end. Without paying attention to the public, Riku broke in laughs.

“Are you being serious? Because she is strong? Because she is the Demon Lord’s sister that there is worth in having her command the Demon Lord army?”

“...What are you trying to say? For one to lead the Demon Lord army, it is necessary to have the equivalent strength for it. Riku Barusak, you are certainly... You are certainly looking to take Charlotte-sama’s position, aren’t you!?”

“As if. There is no way.”

Riku flatly denied. Keity narrowed her eyes. Her gaze was as if she was trying to see through Riku’s true intentions.

“I am a human, you know? It would be ridiculous for a human to command the Demon Lord army. There is no way I would gain approval, and to begin with, something like a provisional demon lord is stupid.”

The meeting room became in uproar. The demons probably were thinking that Riku was planning on kicking down Charlotte and taking the seat of provisional demon lord to herself. Half of the people became shocked that their expectations were wrong, and the remaining half bent their body forward, being full of interest in what Riku was going to say.

“It is stupid, you said?”

Charlotte’s fist was trembling all over. Riku was showing a broad grin.

“Because, isn’t the highest position in the Demon Lord army the Demon Lord? I understand that because the Demon Lord isn’t here now, it is necessary for the strong demons to work together and manage the Demon Lord army. But don’t you think that there is something a bit wrong with a provisional demon lord behaving like she has the authority of the Demon Lord just because he isn’t here?”

There wasn't much of a [for the sake of the Demon Lord army] in Charlotte's actions.

Even regarding the Demon Lord crown too. If she was really thinking of it as something for the sake of the Demon Lord army, she would act more carefully about it. Besides...

“More than anything, at the Derufoi city, because she got interested in Rook Barusak; because of a reason like that, all her subordinates were annihilated. Without bearing any responsibility to it, she had left Rook Barusak unchecked.”

Before, Leivein declared that he would take responsibility himself and dispose of the human, Riku, in the slightest chance she would go against them. Besides, in order to prevent Riku from betraying the Demon Lord army, he took hold of her true name.

Even if with all this was done... should Riku betray the Demon Lord army, at that moment, Leivein would execute Riku and take responsibility.

However, this hadn't been the same for Charlotte.

“How do you intend on taking responsibility for falling in love with Rook Barusak?”(TL note: Actually, the word used is -> うつつを抜かし<-, and not fall in love. The literal meaning of it would be losing the sense of reality or something else. Literally translating this to english, it would become: Losing the sense of reality to Rook Barusak...)



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 74**

# 74.THE GLORY OF THE PROVISIONAL DEMON LORD CHARLOTTE

There was a rumor of the incident at Derufoi spreading.

The demon's general understanding of the incident became that [Charlotte's escort squad was annihilated when protecting her from the spiritualists. And then, risking their life, Leivein Adlar and Riku Barusak went to save her, and were also able to uncover a traitor hiding in the Demon Lord army]. By summarizing it like that, it would be more or less correct. However, this had the most important part of it excluded.

Yes, that was...

"Charlotte-sama has... taken a liking to Rook Barusak?"

Someone's voice thoroughly reverberated.

Making the meeting dead silent, everybody became quiet. Without even needing to glance at her surroundings, Riku had the feeling she already knew the expressions of the demons gathered at the meeting.

The name of Rook Barusak was well known even at the Demon Lord army.

It was a distinguishing young spiritualist that appeared at the recent years, and had got several accomplishments at the battlefield. It was possible to point out this recent war in which Zerrik's second division was destroyed. After this happened, if thinking about the future of the demons, it was inevitable that it was necessary to pluck out the sprouts of Rook's talent before it blossomed.

However, not only had the provisional demon lord that was supposed to have declared the need for Rook's death and have him killed, not only had she fallen in love with the person

himself and let her exceptional escort squad be annihilated, but she ended up getting captured by the spiritualists on top of all that. Such scandal had no comparison. Because of that, Keity and others had controlled the information regarding this event, but with Riku's exposure of it, it became meaningless.

Among the demons, an agitation was spreading to a scale that didn't happen until now.

"Is... That true, Charlotte-sama?"

One of the demons timidly asked Charlotte.

To such question, Charlotte didn't answer anything. With a face slightly pale, she weakly shook her head. Seeing Charlotte acting like that, astonished, Riku thought [How stupid]. If she resolutely denied it, the situation would have become more or less better. However, in a stupidly honest way, Charlotte became shaken.

It was as if she didn't expect that the truth would be exposed here.

"Is.. it the truth? Could it be that Charlotte-sama had taken a liking to Rook Barusak?"

"...I-it's a lie. Don't let her trick you. This is something Riku Barusak is making up!"

Charlotte had finally came back to herself. Signs of her agitation still remained, but somehow she was able to raise her voice, trying to deny the accusations. However, right now... Even if Charlotte denied the reality of her [having fallen in love with Rook], there was no way she could change the situation.

The eyes of more than half of the demons had already been dyed with suspicion of Charlotte. Noticing that the complexion in the eyes of the demons changed, Keity hurriedly spoke.

"You people, there is no way Charlotte-sama would have a crush on the likes of spiritua..."

"Be silent, !!"

What had interrupted Keity was a crude voice. Interrupting her objection, Rudogar Gortoberuk stood up. He had had a huge body that would s. His figure was as if a mountain had moved. (TL note: Here, it is written ->”議会に招致されたあり”とあらゆる魔族たちよりも勝る巨体の持ち主が<- But I am not sure if this is just saying that he had been invited to the meeting or if he had been invited to the meeting before, with the 事 being omitted. If it is just saying that he had been invited to the meeting (Sherlock? :3) I don't think I can put it on the text -.-)

“Hiding the disadvantageous truth. Perhaps for times like this, as a governor, this would be a proper action for the sake of the Demon Lord army's stability.”

With his voice being just like at the times he was at the battlefield, Gortoberuk's voice reverberated through the meeting room, filling it from one corner to another. And then, at the moment Charlotte and Keity's breathed out in relief by having Gortoberuk's support...

“However! The losses for covering those truths are too big! This is nothing more than Charlotte-sama receiving the authority of command from the Demon Lord in the form of her being his [substitute]! It is not exaggeration to say that this last incident has tarnished the Demon Lord's honor in dirt. And so, it is necessity that Charlotte-sama receives a suitable punishment!!”

Right at that instant, and at the instant after that, when they were about to breath out, Keity and Charlotte fell down to the brink of desperation.

In result of the defeat at Myuuz, the Gortoberuk house had considerably declined. But even so, it didn't change the fact that it was a prestigious family. The words of its head, and moreover, with it seeming like a sound argument to the demons, it was possible to imagine how it would become after that.

“...That's right. Charlotte-sama ought to receive punishment.”

Out of nowhere, a voice was raised.

This voice... was the voice of a demon that Riku had talked to before. Because they were demons that had seen some logic in Riku's and Gortoberuk's arguments that they were stirred up by Gortoberuk's declaration right from the beginning.

At first, it was only less than ten people. At the current situation which Charlotte's

weakness was exposed, with those less than ten people supporting this, the voices desiring for Charlotte's dismissal spread through the whole meeting.

“Eei, be silent! Won't you be silent!!?”( ええい )

Keity became desperate and raised her voice.

Keity had grown up in the military, and she would brag about how her voice could fairly well get the message across in loud places, but if this was one person against roughly one hundred, it would be a different case. Keity's voice was drowned out by the voices that desired Charlotte's retirement.(TL note: I couldn't think of a way to translate ->そこそこ  
に声は”通る方”だと自負していた<- to english in only a few words... So I had to use  
get the message across in loud places. Well, I guess people wouldn't mind either way, but  
I will put this here just in case ^^)

“Uu, Fiore! Do you have any plans!?”( う う )

Charlotte couldn't move herself anymore. Charlotte ended up becoming only a little girl trembling with a pale face. A great number of demons that used to be Keity's allies turned into enemies with the denouncing, and the remaining few demons ended up curling themselves up as if they were scared of openly objecting.

Keity's hope was only one... It was her best friend that had been silent since the beginning of this meeting, Fiore.

“Fiore, you too were against the human coming to power, right? This is becoming just like Riku Barusak was planning, you know!?”

“...”

Keeping her serious face, Fiore silently glanced through the state of the meeting.

With her mouth tightly closed, she didn't even look to Keity's direction.

“Fiore! Hey, Fiore! How about you say something? Right now, if it is your voice, maybe it can still reach out to them. If it is you, who possesses a strong influence as a noble...”

“Fiore Panther.”

Interrupting Keity’s words, Riku spoke.

The eyes of the people at the meeting were looking only at Charlotte. There was nobody paying attention to people like Keity, who was struggling by herself, and Riku, who had already left the stage as if hiding behind Gortoberuk’s shadow.

Only Keity was glaring at Riku full of anger.

“I won’t say anything. Everything will be your decision.”

“...”

Fiore didn’t even turn her eyes to Riku.

The figure of she sitting down silently was just like one of a mountain monk.”

“But please, think well. ...Think which side has any future.”

Saying only that, Riku turned her back to Fiore. Even then, Fiore still kept silent.

“What do you want to say, Riku Barusak... Fiore, don’t pay mind to someone like her. Now, say it. Say the words that can put an end to this situation.”

In a gentle and imploring manner, Keity muttered.

The only one that had the power to change this situation was the Fiore, who had an influence that stood above anyone even among the demon nobles.

“Fiore!”

“...Keity, pull back.”

On Fiore's eyes, faint tears appeared.

However, the tears didn't fall down from those eyes. Looking straight to the public, and not at Keity, Fiore spoke of her decision.

“Eh... Fiore?”

It seemed that Keity didn't understand what had happened. She looked at Fiore perplexed.

“What's the matter? What do you mean by telling me to pull back?”

“Charlotte-sama needs to take responsibility for her acts. This is her duty as the provisional demon lord.”

“Fiore!! Have you betrayed us!?”

Staggeringly, Keity took distance from Fiore.

“You... Are you intending on doing just like Riku Barusak had told you!? Could it be she had got hold of your weakness or something? Don't worry about something like that. I will brush her off!”

With her face becoming red, Keity approached Fiore.

“I-I am your best friend! Charlotte's right hand! I am a major general just like that Riku Barusak, and also...!!”

“Originally, wouldn't you also have responsibility for not stopping Charlotte-sama from following Rook Barusak?”

Right now, Fiore's eyes met Keity's for the first time. Fiore's eyes were showing a solid determination.

“Even if you are also a major general, it is major general Riku Barusak, who actually had protected the Demon Lord army from danger, that has a better position in the army, and her words have more influence than yours. I... agree with Charlotte-sama’s dismissal.”

As if she was squeezing it out, Fiore declared her own thoughts.

Keity’s red face withered away, becoming pale, and finally, it became completely white. Then, crumbling down to the ground on her knees, she punched the floor with her fist. A small crack appeared at the polished floor.

Keity’s emotional arguments would not turn the tide anymore. Now that not only had she been betrayed by what could be the worst barrier, but even by the other demons as well, the situation could not be overturned.

And with that, there was nobody that could stop Charlotte’s deposition anymore.

Raising the corner of her mouth, Riku muttered in a low voice.

“Goodbye, Charlotte Demonz.”

The provisional demon lord, Charlotte.

The glory she used to be wrapped up with was slowly falling away.

This was the instant the curtains closed to her govern that lasted for more than a hundred years.



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 75**

# 75.THE DAY OF THE EXECUTION

After some days having passed, Charlotte's execution was going to be carried out now.

Gortoberuk and Fiore became the judges, and by results of the investigation of Charlotte's crimes, crimes other than those that were disclosed by Riku were found; political corruption such as misappropriation of money and bribing. With crimes that it wouldn't be enough no matter how many fingers there were to count them, this wasn't to an extent that she could be pardoned by exiling or house arresting.

Charlotte was sentenced with the most grave punishment. It had been decided she was going to be sentenced to death.

At the central plaza of the demon capital, every single demon was gathered.

In front of their eyes, Charlotte was exposed with her hands tied behind her back. Her crimes had already been announced to all the demons, and moreover, exaggerated rumors such as that [she had connections with the spiritualists and intended to boycott influential demons] or that [she had slept with Rook]. The eyes of the demons gathered at the plaza were bloodshot because of the anger, and words of insult wouldn't stop coming from them.

However, Charlotte, who was the center of this turmoil, didn't even look at the public.

"Gh... All this... everything is her fault."

While biting her lips, Charlotte was only glaring at a single girl. The face that was supposed to be cute was twisted in hatred to the point of it becoming unsightly. An anger that was to the point of the killing intent against the girl be straying from its target and having its traces felt just by coming close was leaking from Charlotte. However, the red haired girl, Riku Barusak, who was being showered directly by Charlotte's anger, smiled in a comfortable manner.

"...Hey, ojou-chan, is this fine? Charlotte-sama is giving you an awful glare, you know?"

Vrusto, who was standing next to Riku, whispered to her worriedly.

However, Riku kept calmly smiling.

“Is that so? I don’t really mind though... Rather, second lieutenant Vrusto, there is no reason for you to use honorifics on that promiscuous girl. You can say her name without them as much as you want.”

“Well, that’s not the problem... Ah, what to say... Does ojou-chan understand the meaning of what you have done?”

Scratching his cheek in a troubled manner, Vrusto asked.

Because the throne of the provisional demon lord was overturned from Charlotte, at the current situation, there was nobody standing at the top of the Demon Lord army.

Only, there was no need to have a provisional demon lord anymore. The reason for that was that after only a few months, the Demon Lord was going to be revived. Until then, Rudogar Gortoberuk would take the command of the military, and the government would be left for Fiore Panther to handle.

“What was that of [I don’t intend on killing Charlotte]? In the end, you killed Charlotte-sama.”

“The ones that decided that wasn’t me. This was just the result of the accumulation of crimes.”

Riku had only disclosed a fragment of Charlotte’s crimes. If Charlotte was self aware of her position of provisional demon lord and acted accordingly, she certainly wouldn’t have been sentenced to death.

“That was the same reason why Fiore Panther had changed to our side. Charlotte’s usual actions had simply pushed her into changing sides. Everything was called upon by Charlotte herself.”

The only thing Riku had done at the few days before the meeting was only one... Before any other demon, she had told Fiore the [what happened at Derufoi in fact].

Fiore, who worked as Charlotte's close supporter, actually knew what had happened at Derufoi. Riku didn't know that, but in fact, the one to order the truth of what happened at Derufoi to be concealed had been Fiore. She had thought that what happened at Derufoi had all been for the sake of the Demon Lord army, but once Riku had left after telling her that, she started having doubts.

"Now that it is close to the moment of the resurrection of the Demon Lord, the spiritualist are certainly going to try stop us seriously. Actually, it has been reported that the spiritualist army had moved to the land where the Demon Lord had been sealed at. If you consider that this will be a serious battle against the spiritualists, objectively thinking, do you think that Charlotte is appropriate for being the provisional demon lord."

"That..."

Being asked that by Riku, Vrusto averted his eyes.

The battle that would put in line the resurrection of the Demon Lord would be the most important of battles. Then, would it be fine to leave the command to someone that had feelings of love to a spiritualist even if it had been for only a moment? No, there was no way it would be. Would it be good to have someone with this faint love in her mind to give the ultimatum for the decisions of the Demon Lord army? No, there was no way it would be. Fiore should have understood that long ago, but she had her relationship with her best friend, Keity, who revered Charlotte, and probably because of that, she couldn't judge that Charlotte had to be dismissed.

It was clear that if Fiore was able to cut off the feelings built up over a long time and become capable of doing logical decisions, she would easily change her side to the opposing faction. Currently, Fiore, who had given her final word that [Charlotte didn't have the abilities to lead the Demon lord army], had already joined into the anti Charlotte faction.

"If you make a mistake by getting carried away by your feelings, you would be having your neck strangled yourself. You should remember this, second lieutenant Vrusto."

"I will say back those words just the way you had said them."

Vrusto gave a pat at Riku's shoulder.

"This time, ojou-chan's movements were reasonable. There were no mistakes. However, ojou-chan's emotions... Rather, you could say it is a bad habit, right. It showed up this time too."

"Bad habit?"

Riku didn't understand at all what Vrusto was trying to tell her. Looking back at this time's dispute, Riku didn't remember doing anything bad, and she didn't think had she had some sort of weird habit. Bending her head to the side just like a little bird, she looked at Vrusto in wonder.

"Do I have any bad habits?"

"Stupid, be more self-aware. Ojou-chan's bad habit is to think too much about captain Leivein."

"Is this a bad habit?"

Riku frowned. She knew that her own actions were for the objective of [having revenge against the Barusak] and [becoming Leivein's right-wing], but she didn't really understand how this was a bad habit.

Defeated, Vrusto shook his head, and right at the moment he was about to say something...

"I didn't do anything wrong!"

Charlotte's sorrowful cries echoed through the plaza.

Turning their eyes towards the center of the plaza, they saw Charlotte's figure about to have her arms and legs tied by ropes. The other side of each of the four ropes were connected to ferocious bulls. The reason why Charlotte was having her limbs tied was because it had been decided she would be executed (牛の尻を叩き暴走させる). There was no way the small body of a little girl would endure the strength of the pull of running bulls from each of the four sides. (TL note: I couldn't find anything about this by googling

what was written, but it is obvious that it is that type of execution that the limbs of the person are torn by having the animals pull him apart from different sides. I don't know the name of this even in my native language, so I have no way to find a name for it... If someone knows, please write it in the comments^^)

Charlotte's fate was to have her body tore apart and die.

Because Charlotte had treated the Demon Lord army as her own object, the demons were feeling an anger that felt their bodies would rip up from it. From the demon's perspective, this ending was only the obvious, but by Charlotte, who was going to be executed, this death was one she definitely couldn't accept.

"What have I done wrong!? You all are only being fooled by that human's sweet talk!"

"Oh, you are so cruel to say I fooled them."

Without hearing Vrusto trying to stop her, she went towards Charlotte.

Charlotte's left arm and right left had already been tied up with the rope. Signaling with her hand to the executors that were tying up the remaining limbs for them to pull back, Riku looked at the unsightly Charlotte.

"I had only told them the truth."

"Riku Barusak... Have you forgot your gratitude? If I didn't recognize you, there would be no way you would be standing in the place you are now, you know!?"

"Even if you hadn't recognized me, captain Leivein had already recognized me."

While looking at Charlotte, Riku indifferently told her the reality.

Throwing the wheat like beautiful golden hair out of order, Charlotte faced Riku. Suddenly opening both of her eyes, opening her small mouth to the point that it felt it would rip apart, she shouted.

"I... I am the Demon Lord's sister, you know!? Moreover, the provisional demon lord!

What is the problem of me using the Demon Lord army as I want!!

To Charlotte's eyes, everyone serving at the Demon Lord army were the property of her brother. Since they were the property of the Demon Lord, it was obvious that she, who was the sister of the proprietor, would be idolized.

In short words, what she thought of Keity, Fiore, Riku, and also Leivein was not that they were [soldiers of the Demon Lord army], but [property of the Demon Lord], and so, [they were nothing but chess pieces that she could use freely]. With what Riku had been faintly suspecting of being publicly declared, despite how everything was already concluded, her anger exploded.

"You promiscuous girl... We, ...captain Leivein is not your tool!"

Leaving her body to her anger, Riku moved her hand to the halberd at her back.

The instant the blade of her halberd flashed, Charlotte's eyes sparkled. Because it looked as if Riku's halberd could cut the rope and release her, Charlotte moved her body as to have it hit the rope.

"Scream, promiscuous girl."

However, this little trick wasn't passed by Riku.

Leisurely moving the halberd with a single arm, she cut off Charlotte's right arm. Like a fountain, blood flowed out from the injury, and Charlotte's scream reverberated.

While having blood dripping off from her halberd, Riku asked Charlotte, who was suffering with the pain.

"Now, there is still time for you to give your apologies. Charlotte Demonz... Give your apologies for your disrespect to captain Leivein."

"...I-I didn't do anything wrong. You will see, Riku Barusak. One day, when onii-sama resurrects, you will..."

“I see, so you won’t apologize.”

Briefly muttering that, Riku dropped down her halberd at Charlotte’s left leg.

In continuation to the right arm, Charlotte’s left leg was cut off, and a shrilling scream echoed through the plaza. Riku was being driven by the urge of cutting her head off, but she tried to content herself by kicking her head.

“Ghn...”(ぐぬう)

Seeming like she had used a little bit too much strength, Charlotte’s twisted face was swelled up to the point of it becoming unrecognizable. Charlotte’s golden hair that used to be beautiful had her own spilled blood sticking to it.

Thinking a bit, Riku showed a smile as if she had thought of something fun.

“Then, I will give you a choice.”

Riku put one of her feet onto Charlotte’s swelled up face. While stepping at her and rubbing her feet at the cheek that became brown red, Riku spoke to Charlotte in a gentle voice as if she was gently scolding her.

“If you say that [you are a promiscuous girl that slept with the enemy], I will convince them to spare you.”

While tapping her own shoulder with the handle of her halberd, Riku was showing a smile that was as if she was having a lot of fun.

Since this seemed to be something only to humiliate her, Charlotte’s swelled up face twisted, but even so, in tears, she said it in the end.

“I-I am a promiscuous girl that slept with the enemy.”

“Sorry, the audience was too loud, so I couldn’t hear it.”



Riku calmly said.

Confirming that Charlotte's face was colored in despair, Riku went away from Charlotte and went close to the one of the bulls that were on standby.

"Now then, that is the end. See you, Charlotte Demonz."

After giving the signal by raising her hand to the executioner that was next to the other bull, Riku slapped the bull's buttocks. With the bull raising its front feet to the air because of the sudden pain, it started to run ahead. With the bull of the other side also being spanked at the buttock in the same way, it started running as if it was running away from the pain.

Despite her supplications, Charlotte, who was being pulled by opposite sides, was torn apart.

Her angry babblings were drown out by the crowd's excitement, and so, nobody was able to hear what Charlotte had said in her final moments.

Looking at Charlotte, who became unable to say anything, in a bored manner, she headed outside the plaza.

"...Now then, with that, there are no nuisances left. Vrusto, we are going back to Myuuz."

The public, who couldn't contain their anger, gathered around the torn apart Charlotte.

Going in the opposite direction of the waves of people, the moment they had left the plaza, Vrusto spoke.

"Hey, ojou-chan. Someday, you might end up getting cursed."

Vrusto let out a few complaints. Vrusto's eyes were showing a seriousness unusual to him.

"There is also Shibira's prophecy, isn't there? Be a bit more indulgent, ojou-chan."

“It’s fine. No matter what kind of bad future there is, I will cut my way out of it. Besides, I am fine. I won’t die until I become captain Leivein’s right-wing after all.”

Showing a smile full of brightness, she ran the gate, where the soldiers she had brought along before were waiting for her. Soon, it would rain. Coming from the west, clouds black to the point that it was as if they were irritated were coming towards them.

“...Should we go get some umbrellas?”

Quietly muttering this, Vrusto followed after Riku while hearing the frenzied voices of the crowd behind him.

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At this same, there was something happening at the royal capital as well.

“...In accord to your crimes, Rook Barusak shall be exiled from the royal capital. Until you recover my beloved princess, you are not to come back to the royal capital again.”

The king Shiidoru declared Rook Barusak’s punishment.

The king was furious. His beloved and very cute princess he had raised with all his heart was kidnapped by the demons. In addition to that, the fact that the cause for it was the lady killer, Rook Barusak, was like putting oil on fire.

In a situation like this, there was no way Rook could object against the punishment. Rook was silently hearing the sentence passed by the king.

“Do you have any objections, Rook Barusak?”

“No. I will go rescue princess Catherine myself.”

Kneeling down in one knee, Rook silently lowered his head. However, his voice was trembling.

The rescue event that would happen if you failed at stopping Catherinne from being abducted certainly did exist.

However, the king wouldn't be enraged, and more importantly, the heroines that had high affection levels with would cover up for him. They would declare that they would accompany him in the journey to rescue Catherinne.

...However, there were no signs this happening

There were some noble girls that were watching over him while swallow saline, but there were no signs that they would butt in the conversation. Lonely, Rook made a sad smile.

"...As expected, it is different from the game."

"Did you say something, Rook Barusak?"

"No, I was just talking to myself. I will definitely save her!"

Rook swore that he would do to his upmost ability to rescue princess Catherinne.

He wanted to rescue Catherinne fair and square, and fix the regrets of Selestinna, Rebecca, Kurumi and the others, and also the people that had died until now that he didn't know the name, and heal up the wounds in Riku's heart, whom he had thrown away.(TL note: I don't understand what he means by saying wanting to rescue Catherinne fair and square...

The word used here is 正々堂々, which literally means that... Hmm, but it kind of gives the feeling that it has the meaning of Rook definitely rescuing the princess without giving up. Well, it doesn't matter too much ^^)

"Ah, there are many things I need to do."

Taking his leave from the king, he scratched his head.

There was also the need to reconcile with Charlotte in order to stop the Demon Lord from resurrecting. For the sake of the peace, there might be a need to face against Raimon, his father. The things that he needed to do were piling up into a mountain in front of his eyes.

“But this is my responsibility.”

It was because the things he needed to do were many that there was no way he could give up.

He believed it was his atonement for him to do anything he could.

Looking ahead, Rook started to walk.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 76**

# 76.THE SEASON OF THE RED LEAVES

The mountain nearby the royal capital were completely colored in red.

The mountains that used to be shining in green was now colored in the red color, giving it the feeling that autumn was at its pinnacle. After the few days there are left for the leaves to fall off, it would finally become the period of time when the ground would become covered in snow.

“Ah, such a beautiful scenery.”

A spiritualist muttered.

An army of spiritualists was gathered at the cave system deep into the mountains filled in red. Half of the spiritualists were deep inside the caverns while the remaining ones were standing outside them in guard. This certain spiritualist was part of the latter. Leaning against the entrance of the cave, he looked at the redness in front of his eyes.

“Now that I think of it, the young master of the Barusak household had said something about [leaf peeping], that was some kind of banquet that you would look at the autumn leaves. Ah, I want to drink some alcohol.”(TL note: Autumn version of that sakura seeing thing I guess?

“Hey, don’t lower your guard! The Demon Lord army might attack at any time, you know!?”

Standing next to the spiritualist who had casually dropped his guard, his colleague urged.

“This is the land the Demon Lord is sealed at. You see, now that the princess-sama was captured, they will be attacking here next. It wouldn’t be weird even if the enemy attacked any time, you know!?”

“Hm... Well, I guess, but... is the Demon Lord army really that strong?”

The spiritualist wasn't really feeling any sense of tension.

In these last few years, and in these few months in special, they had suffered many great defeats to the Demon Lord army. However, they killed the commander of Fert, Zerrik, and at a battle from few days ago, Leivein, who could be said to be the core of the Demon Lord army, had been put to the verge of dying. Most likely, they were able to deal an injury that made him close to death when Leivein went to protect the provisional demon lord Charlotte.

“Aren't all the strong people of the Demon Lord army disabled? In that case, we should be able to deal with them somehow, right?”

“What are you talking!? Don't you know about that?”

In a fit of anger, the colleague grabbed the spiritualist by the collar.

“What are you talking about?”

“The rumor of the red haired demon. A demon of small build that had annihilated a whole army at Karkata. With her red hair dripping blood, he would swung her huge halberd around.”

His voice was slightly trembling.

The rumor of the red haired demon had spread among the spiritualist. This spiritualist had heard about that before, but laughed it off as if it didn't matter much.

“But you know, isn't it that the rumors are just being exaggerated?”

“Stupid! Apparently, it is not the case. I've heard it directly from the survivors of Karkata.”

“But even though you say it is a demon, isn't its hair red? In that case, should the demon be the [traitor Riku]?”

“...Traitor Riku?”

The companion frowned. He inclined his head with the words [traitor Riku] he didn't recall hearing about. And then, the spiritualist spoke in a lowered voice.

“Just between us, but it seems that Raimon-sama's second daughter had betrayed the spiritualists and had been working to the demons.”

“Haa!? What do you mean by...”

“Shh, you are being too loud.”

The spiritualist hurriedly put his hand at the mouth of his colleague. The colleague was surprised to the point that it looked as if his eyeballs would fall off. With the spiritualist putting up a somewhat serious face, he continued while lowering his voice even more.

“My aniki is from the squad Raimon-sama directly controls, you see. It seems that she was thrown away from some cliff and survived. And then, she was picked up by the demons.”

“...Is this true?”

Removing the hand from his mouth, the colleague quietly muttered back.

It is known to the spiritualists affiliated to the Barusak household, or rather, even if they are not spiritualists from the Barusak household, it is known that Raimon Barusak had a red haired daughter. How he had dealt with her some years ago is a common knowledge that people usually don't talk about.

“It's true. And besides, it seems that Raimon-sama cut off her right arm. So, doesn't it mean that there aren't anybody among the demons that could pose a threat.”

“I-I see. But this isn't a reason for lowering your guard. There is still a chance that they have someone strong that we still don't know of.”



Tapping his own cheeks, the companion once again made a serious face. After answering back, he once again looked towards the direction where the mountain range extended to.

“But if they are really heading to the [seal], shouldn’t the others notice them coming?”

The spiritualist muttered while looking at the red leaves fluttering down.

If someone spots the demon army coming to the foot of the mountain, it would be immediately reported. It wasn’t possible to think that a small demon army would be able to overpower the elite spiritualists that were protecting the seal, and if a large army barged in, they would definitely be spotted midway. With the spiritualist saying that, his colleague hesitantly nodded.

“Well, that makes sense. But you can never be too careful, you know? There is no mistake that the troops protecting the seal are elite-picked. But...”

The companion’s words were interrupted.

It wasn’t that he had stopped speaking, but that his head had flown to the air together with the sound of air being cut. By sudden occurrence, confused, the spiritualist looked at his companion whose head vanished from sight.

“Eh?”

The only thing the spiritualist could say was that.

In the next instant, his own neck also ended up getting cut off by the sharp halberd. With the overpowering pain that was impossible to imagine of, while having his consciousness disappearing, what the spiritualist had seen in his last moments was a girl in a red armor with vermillion colored hair that made his cheeks blush... (TL note: WTF? 退魔師が最期に目にしたのは、赤い鎧に身を包み、頬を紅潮させた朱色の髪の少女 Just in case ^^)

“For this to be the elite-picked troops. How disappointing.”

It was a one-armed girl that blended with the autumn leaves of the mountain.

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”Suppression complete.”

Riku Barusak sat down at a rock nearby.

The mountain that was colored by the autumn was now colored even more in red by the blood. Taking out a blood covered paper, Riku gave a small sigh.

“It’s not here either”

The paper she had spread at her things was the map which had the surroundings of the royal capital drawn on it. At the mountains and coastlands, there were some circles and x marks written on them. Conveniently making use of her finger soaked with blood, she wrote an x mark at the circle of the place they were at.

“Really, there are too many places where the seal might be. Couldn’t they bring down the numbers a bit more?”

“There is no helping to that. This is the most they could do.”

As he said that, Vrusto’s figure appeared from inside the cave.

“By the way, isn’t ojou-chan from the Barusak? Shouldn’t they have at least taught you about the place the Demon Lord is sealed at?”

“Unfortunately, I don’t know. The real location is only told to the heads of the four spiritualist families and the elite troops. Other than that, everything is [bait] information. ...But by how they were acting, it seems they didn’t let the troops protecting this false location know about it.”

Riku looked at her feet. Laying there, there was the bodies of the spiritualists that had believed they were [really protecting the seal]. Without doubt, this too was only false information just so that the real place the seal is at is not discovered.

Immediately after sealing the Demon lord... the spiritualists of that era didn't announce the [location of the seal] by probably fearing the counter attack of the demons and the resurrection of the Demon Lord.

In order to carefully hide where the seal is, the spiritualists sent some troops to protect places that had no relation to the seal as [places where the seal could possibly be]. Those places were also kept secret, but after many years of investigation by the Demon Lord army, they had discovered many points that might be the location of the seal

Receiving Gortoberuk's orders, Riku went to do a thorough search at those places.

"With this one, it is already the fourth. ...For them to do this kind of thing, they should be very scared of the Demon Lord resurrecting."

Since childhood, Riku had been learning about the threat the Demon Lord was.

The Demon Lord had done every possible act of cruelty in this world, and it seems that he had drown the royal city in the blood of several humans. With that said, there were many points that were different from the reality in the information she had learned about. Riku couldn't get a clue about to what extent the Demon Lord's strength was true. (TL note: What would this mean? ->退魔師時代に習った<- Is it talking about an era or about the time Riku was learning spiritualist things?)

"Now then, which one should we go crush next?"

"Hmm, right. What about we go attack the caves around here before reporting the information we got? If they become aware of our attack, they might fortify their defenses, and it would be bothersome since we keep getting the wrong places."

"That's right... But considering the report of the movement of the spiritualists that I received this morning from Karula, it feels like the mountain of the other side is suspicious."

The movement of the spiritualists in these last weeks were relentless.

As if they were trying to hide something, without holding a certain [ceremony of departure] they would usually always do when dispatching troops at all, the movement

between the royal capital and the garrison increased.

“I think it is important to send scouts to the other side of the mountain and be ready to launch an attack anytime.”

“Stupid. It’s obvious they are leaking information on purpose, you know? Since we can’t confirm the veracity of the information, we should just dispatch Asty’s troops together with a scouting squad to the other mountain. It’s better for us, the main troops, to go attack other places.”

“But what would we do if that place was where the real [location of the seal] was at? If it was to be the case, the defenses would be stronger, and there is nobody else that is strong enough to break through their defenses other than me.”

“...You have quite the confidence, ojou-chan.”

Riku gave a glance to Vrusto’s slightly surprised face.

“Well... Indeed, there is no way we can use unreliable information for our movements. For now, we will send the scouts of the main forces and have Asty arrange her troops for them to be ready to launch an attack anytime. We will keep searching around the places nearby. Is this fine?”

Riku understood that it was just sheer stupidity to base an attack in unreliable information without sending scouts before. At the times they had been attacking the places around here, they would send scouts before so that they could confirm if there were any traps and the number of stationed spiritualists, and only after that, she would choose about twenty of the best demons and lead an assault to the place.

...Although they couldn’t find the correct location, because they had used the scouts beforehand, they had been putting the losses of the demon side to the minimum. With just that, it was good enough.

“No problems. Then, I will go contact Asty.”

“I will be counting on you... Hm?”

After seeing Vrusto off, Riku felt a gaze at her.

The figure of someone coming from in between the trees colored in red was caught by her eyes. Because the person rushed in faster than birds were, Riku unconsciously brandished her halberd. With Riku putting her halberd right next to that person's throat, the person was pushed down to the ground and stopped his moving.

“Who?”

“Hii, it's me! Roppu Nezaaland!”

With the halberd pressed next to his throat, Roppu's face became pale to the point of it being pitiful.

After her eyes becoming wide-open for a moment, her expression softened, looking apologetic.

“Sorry, major sergeant Roppu. So, did something happen for you to be in such hurry?”

Putting down her halberd, Riku waited for Roppu to get up. After coughing violently a few times, he started talking after sorting out his breathing.

“Yes, actually... A request for an appointment with major general Riku has arrived....”

“Appointment? In a time like this?”

Riku frowned.

Now that there wasn't a provisional demon lord anymore, Riku had come to be Gortoberuk's aide. Because of that, it became convenient now that she could directly meet him instead of seeking his contact. But on the other side, there would be demons that would try to flatter Riku despite her being a human, although most of those were more desperate for flattering Gortoberuk.

“Who? A demon from some noble family?”

“No, that is...”

Hesitantly, Roppu took out an thin envelope.

The instant she saw the symbol of the wax seal that was pressed in the letter of fine quality, Riku eyes became wide-open to the point of them looking as if they would fall off.

“...Who did you get this from?”

“From the sender herself. I was also half doubting about this, but since her appearance was the same to what I had heard from major general Riku...”

Riku started pondering for a while.

Putting her finger at her head, she started to think. She couldn't seriously think that the sender of the envelope would propose to meet with her time like this. Was this a trap? She was worried that once Riku would go to the meeting place, spiritualists and human mercenaries would ambush her and try to take her down.

“Major general?”

Roppu looked at Riku acting nervous. After pondering about it, Riku decided to open the envelope for now, biting it off as to have it open. While thinking how it would be convenient if she had both of her arms at times like this, she bit the seal of the envelope open and took out its contents.

There was one folded letter inside the envelope, and together with it, there was also a map with the place they should meet drawn. The letters were big, but unusually for Riku, the letters written were unexpectedly very elegant. While doubting whether it was a trap, she calmly read the letter.

“Major general Riku, what do you think about it?”

“...Impossible.”

Riku quietly muttered.

After finishing reading it to the last letter, Riku's eyes changed. Her cheeks and the hand that was holding the letter somewhat trembled.

“What is it?”

This was a earth-shattering development

Because of how astonishing it was, Riku couldn't hide her trembling.

That was because what was written in the letter was an information of something that should have been impossible no matter how one would think.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 77**



# 77.THE DESTINATION OF THE FUGITIVE

“What? She escaped -de gozaru!?”

Asty Gortoberuk’s enraged voice reverberated to all directions through the forest.

Because of the sound of the voice, the birds became surprised and flew away. The usual Asty would be careful of that since the spiritualists would notice their location, but right now, she had ended up losing her composure.

“Without doubts, for Keity Foster to have escaped prison...”

Asty clenched her fist

Asty used to get along with Keity Foster.

Both were companions and girls of the same age, and moreover, both their families had about the same amount of prestige, and so, they competed as good rivals. Keity was more outstanding than Asty and climbed up to become the provisional demon lord’s assistant, but now that she had lost her footing, their positions were reverted. However, she believed that the day she would devote her sword to the Demon Lord army, to Riku Barusak, would come once again.

“How did she run away? There was no way she could break away so easily from that prison-de gozaru.”

Asty asked the messenger for details. If she didn’t know about the situation, she wouldn’t be able to plan her next actions. Giving a small nod, the messenger immediately started talking.

“By what the report says, it seems that the prison was filled with guards that were devoted to Charlotte, and using their guidance, she escaped. Those guards had already been caught.”

“Fine then-de gozaru. Now, where did Keity Foster run to-de gozaru?”

“Uhh, if I’m not mistaken... She ran to east.”

After saying that, the messenger opened up a map.

At the map that had the territories controlled by demons and territories controlled by humans next to each other, the position of the prison Keity Foster was imprisoned at was drawn on it. Narrowing her eyes, Asty lightly leaned her chin onto her hand and started thinking.

“East... de gozaru?”

By going from the prison distant to the east, one would arrive at Taitas, the demon capital. However, even if one kept walking without sleeping, it would take more than twenty days. Even if one had trained oneself as a soldier, this was somewhat of a impossible march. Keity would be spotted while she headed to the demon capital, so the chances of she being caught once again were high. However, there weren’t any other demon towns or villages other than the demon capital that Keity Foster could escape to. There were villages along the way, but it was difficult to imagine she would seek help in a small village.

First of all, it was well known among the demons what kind of crime had Keity Foster committed for her to be imprisoned. If spiritualists came to attack the village, they wouldn’t have enough fighting power to protect themselves. And so, for them to be able to safely continue to live, they would need to ask for the help of the Demon Lord army. There was no way the villages would shelter Keity Foster and go against the new order that was led by Rudogar Gortoberuk and Riku Barusak.

That’s why running away to the east by itself was a reckless move.

“Considering that, would this mean that she pretended to go to the east and planned go to another direction after that?”

“Yes. That is probably correct-de gozaru.”

“If it is not east... Then, would it be south? There is a demon town there.”

The messenger pointed to a spot at the map. At that spot, there was a town that was about three days away from the prison Keity Foster escaped from.

“It is not as much as Taitas, but it is a town overflowing with liveliness. If you want to hide a tree, you hide it in a forest, and a demon, among the demons.”(TL note: Better way to phrase this up? 木を隠すなら森の中、魔族を隠すなら魔族の中、ということですよ)

“I guess-de gozaru na.”

Although Asty answered this to him, her true feelings didn't correspond to it.

Similar to Asty herself, Keity Foster was a very simple and straight forward woman. However, even with that fault, she was still someone that was promoted to become Charlotte's close aide. With that considered, would she really use a method that gave the impression of being hastily thought of?

“...”

Asty silently glared at the map. It was impossible for her to go to east. South would be reasonable. If it was west, she would end up going back to the place she ran away from, and so, the remaining direction was...

“Perhaps, she might have gone north-de gozaru.”

“North, you say? No, but... I think it would be unlikely.”

At the map, by advancing to the north, there would be city.

The city that was about two days away was much bigger than the city at the south. It was possible to imagine that if Keity was able to run away to that city, it would be extremely difficult to keep the pursue. However, there was no way someone with common sense

would run away to that city. Rather, there was no way they would make it alive.

“The town at the north... Is a human town, isn't it? Once she goes in there, she would be immediately killed.”

The messenger turned down Asty's idea. With her arms crossed, Asty herself agreed to the messenger opinion.

“Normally, it would be the case-de gozaru. Not to mention, Asty's arms are exactly like ones of a beast-de gozaru na. There is no way to hide them by having clothes covering them-de gozaru.”

“In that case...”

“However! That town is an exception-de gozaru.”

Asty looked at the name of the city written there.

Asty herself had never been there, but it was a city that its name would be talked about among the demons very often.

“Derufoi. If it is that city, even if your figure is more or less of a demon, you can still have it pass by as a costume-de gozaru.”

Derufoi.

It was the city where Shibira, who could see the future, lived at.

It was a city composed of only humans, but... Every once a few months... an event that would make it not weird even if demons sneaked inside would be hold.

“It is Derufoi's masquerade festival. If it is only something of the level of Keity's arms, it is possible to pretend that is a costume-de gozaru. It is possible that she would head to another place from that city-de gozaru.”

It was a festival demons of strange tastes liked to sneak into. If Asty's memories were correct, the provisional demon lord had gone to sightsee at the last festival together with Riku Barusak. At that time, it seems that because there were many skilled spiritualists participating at the festival, Charlotte's true identity was exposed. That said, right now, there was no need to mind about something like that.

“At the current situation, the spiritualists have no time to be playing around. After all, the king's daughter was abducted and the time for the Demon Lord's resurrection is coming closer by each hour-de gozaru.”

She couldn't imagine there would be spiritualists that would be playing around in a situation like this. If there were any that would do that, it would be a completely retarded, an useless... or perhaps, a foolish spiritualist that would only get in the way of their plans.

“The more skilled the spiritualist, the more likely they would assign him to protect the Demon Lord seal-de gozaru. As long as she takes the minimum precautions, there wouldn't be any problems-de gozaru.”

“...Would you be saying that even if there were spiritualists at the festival, there wouldn't be any worries about getting suspected of?”

“Umu.”

In fact, as Charlotte's escort, Keity had already gone to Derufoi before. Previously, Keity should have already completely investigated the city beforehand for the sake of Charlotte's protection. Even if it was a human city, rather than a city she had never seen before, it was obvious that it was better to run away to a city she already knew of.

“Besides, during the festival, the movement between cities would become more intense - de gozaru. That's why there being people that didn't live at the city there wouldn't be thought as something strange-de gozaru.”

At the period the festival was being held, many people would gather.

There were many people that were vigilant about [people they weren't familiar with], but at the time of the festival, their vigilance would lower down to the point that they would simply guess the person was just participating in the party. Except for the fact it was a [human city], there were only merits.

“I see... I understand. Now then, I will be reporting this to major general Barusa...”

“Don’t do this-de gozaru.”

Asty stopped the messenger.

Surprised, the messenger raised his face.

“Riku-dono... I would like to avoid having this reported to Riku-dono-de gozaru yo.”

“However!”

“Riku-dono is putting all her efforts in the resurrection of the Demon Lord-de gozaru. There is no way I can bother her with trivial things.”

Asty had seen a sliver of Riku’s fury before.

Riku Barusak is someone that would prey on her target, waiting for an opportunity while sharpening her blade of vengeance. And then, once she brandished her halberd, a tempest of blood would violently blow. Asty had got this message many times from seeing the spiritualists that became her victims. This would be the same even if the ones she pointed that blade to were demons. In fact, because Charlotte, the former provisional demon lord, had made Riku her enemy, she had lost her future.

...If it was by Asty herself, she thought that it was better for Keity to receive a lighter punishment even despite what she had done, but there was no way she could say this in front of Riku. If she objected her, she would also get her hostility, and perhaps would end up killed.

To Asty, Riku was a benefactor that had saved her grandfather. Asty also admired the overwhelming power that had massacred the enemy that her grandfather couldn’t compare to.

That’s why Asty Gortoberuk feared and admired Riku. Once she incurred her wrath, her head would end up being cut off. The overwhelming power she admired was so scary and

terrifying that she couldn't bear.

Without doubt, Keity Foster would end up getting killed by Riku.

Asty didn't want to kill the friend she had for a long time experienced joys and sorrows together. Closing her eyes, Asty calmly told the messenger the makeshift reason.

"...If Keity's escape reaches Riku-dono's ears, she would go pursue her-de gozaru. At the current state of the Demon Lord army, without Riku-dono, it is close to impossible for we to search through the land where the Demon Lord is sealed at. That's why we can only let Riku-dono know about this after we captured Keity Foster-de gozaru yo."

"...Understood. Now then, I will be preparing a searching party to Derufoi."

"Umu. As a precaution, leave people at every quarters-de gozaru yo."

"Ha!!"

After firmly responding, the messenger immediately started the preparations for the searching party.

In case the searching party finds Keity, they are to immediately capture her. In case they decide it is too difficult to capture her, it would be fine for Asty to go arrest Keity herself. There was no need for Riku to trouble herself with that, and there was no need to have Keity killed. Despite all, she was still a demon that got promoted to the point of becoming Charlotte's close aide. Once her head cools down, she would definitely be able to work for the sake of the Demon Lord army.

"There is no need... to kill her-de gozaru yo."

"Reporting!!"

When Asty stood up still immersed in thoughts, a subordinate rushed in.

His face was showing impatience. Asty had cold sweat. ((

“It can’t be! Have Riku-dono already killed Keity-de gozaru!?”

“No! It is the enemy! A spiritualist have come to our way!!”

“A spiritualist-de gozaru!?”

At that time, Asty regretted about her mistake.

The concealment of Asty and her troops should have been perfect. She could only imagine one reason for their place to be discovered by the spiritualists despite that. There was no mistake that the cause for that was because Asty ended up shouting after losing control of herself due to the anger from before. Because of that shout, their position had ended up being discovered.

“Ku, there is no helping-de gozaru! Immediately arrange the preparations for the counter attack -de gozaru. How many spiritualists are there-de gozaru?”

“N-no... this... There was only one.”

“One? A spiritualist came by himself?”

Asty wondered if it was a patrol.

However, by looking at her subordinate’s behavior, it didn’t seem to be the case. While Asty had been thinking about what this was about, the subordinate continued his words.

“This spiritualist has already been disarmed... He persistently asked us to let him meet the person in charge...”

“...What is this about-de gozaru?”

“I don’t know... What should be done?”



No matter how the spiritualist was disarmed, there was no way Asty could let him into their base.

There was a chance that the spiritualist was plotting to do a suicide attack by exploding himself once he saw who the person in charge was. It was possible to imagine the possibility of them planning on having the commander dying and launching an attack at the troops that would have fallen into disorder. While frowning, Asty started to think.

“Really, today, problems are coming one after another-de gozaru yo. By the way, do you know what family that spiritualist is from?”

“Ha, I will immediately verify...”

“It is serious!!”

Interrupting those words, another subordinate broke in.

The complexion of his face was worse than the complexion of the subordinate that came to report a moment ago by one level. His face went beyond being pale and was completely white. It seemed that he was somewhat trembling.

“What is it-de gozaru?”

“Ye-yes. We have confirmed the identity of the spiritualist.”

Asty readied herself for her subordinate’s report.

For him to be trembling to that point, there was no mistake the enemy was exceptional. Was it not a patrol, but a big figure that came to attack? Asty increased her guard.

At the room that fell silent to the point of one being able to hear his breathing, the awfully trembling voice echoed.

“It is a silver haired with the crest of a griffon. It is the heir of the Barusak, Rook Barusak!!”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 78**

# 78.WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS?

“...Why did it have to be like this?”

Rook Barusak was feeling he was about to collapse.

Using his game knowledge, he kept walking for many weeks towards the Demon Lord castle. And in one day... when he was walking through a forest that was close to the demon territory, he had heard a shout that was closer to the scream of a woman.

“Although I came running to check what was happening... Right?”

The killing intent of grim faced demons was surrounding Rook.

In his current situation, Rook wanted to avoid crossing swords with the demons. Since he had been killing a great number of demons until now, he didn't want to kill any more of them. But even with that said, there was no way he could ignore the scream of the woman.

“You are a human... What did you come to a place like this for?”

One of the demons slowly approached Rook.

The demons he could see were only five. However, by the killing intent coming from behind the trees, there were about ten to twenty more of them. There should be no doubts that there were also demons aiming their arrows at him from the shadows of the trees.

“Answer quickly. We are not very patient.”

Rook heard the sound of a bow being drawn from somewhere.

It seems that they were being serious. Rook was desperately thinking of what he should say for them to spare him.

If he was to honestly say that he came to talk with their provisional demon lord and have the princess back, the only result would be them killing him. Moreover, they were common soldiers. If he was to say that he was acquainted to Charlotte, there would be no way for them to confirm that, and there was a high chance of them end up going after him after deciding he was lying.

“I-I...”

Think, think, think...

It was the first time since Rook reincarnated into this world that he thought so seriously.

“Quickly! Don’t waste more of our time!!”

A demon of good physique roared. The howl that made the air tremble made Rook’s back muscles stood up. Irritated, the demon crossed his arms.

And it was at that moment.

The emblem that was on the armor the demons were wearing caught Rook’s attention.

“Ah.”

That was the Gortoberuk’s family crest.

Gortoberuk was a boss in the earlier parts of the game... He was the lord of Myuuz castle, which was commanded by Asty Gortoberuk and himself, Rudogar Gortobeurk. There was no mistake that those troops served one of the two. In that case, shouldn’t the scream from a while ago be Asty Gortoberuk’s?

“What is it? You have only three seconds left.”

If saying it in a good way, both Rudogar and Asty were hot-blooded. But saying it in a bad way, they were emotional commanders.

“Three!”

However, this was reality. For them to have led their troops for many years only proved how capable they were. Even if they might have the bad habit of being emotional, they certainly had the composure to lead an army.

“Two!”

Besides, at least... From what Rook knew from the game, the grandfather granddaughter duo of the Gortoberuk wouldn't needlessly kill humans that wanted to talk. That was specially for the granddaughter, Asty Gortoberuk, who even though seemed to be rough, was actually a very kind woman at the core.

“One!”

Rook didn't have the time to be fooling around. He decided to trust his game knowledge for now. Clenching his hands, Rook looked at the face of the demon that seemed to be their leader.

“Zero!”

“I want to have a talk. With you demons and me!”

Rook's scream overlapped with the demon's last count. Having cold sweat, Rook was worried if his voice had been drown out. However, it seemed that his voice had reached the demons.

“...What did you say?”

The demons started become agitated.

That was obvious. Since a long time so long to the point of it being astounding, humans and demons had always been fighting each other. Even if Rook suddenly says he wanted

to talk, it was obvious they would become troubled. Rather, they surely were thinking it was a trap.

“Say the truth, human.”

It seemed that the demon put on a more vigilant attitude just in case. The demon that was standing in front of Rook silently made a signal by raising his hand. And then, together with the sound of the wind being cut, something pierced the ground near his feet. Lowering his eyes, Rook saw a sharp arrow stuck at the ground.

“The next time you spout a lie, it will be hitting your head.”

It seemed that they didn't believe what Rook was saying at all.

Perhaps, if he was at their position, he also wouldn't believe this. Rook made a wry smile in his mind.

“It is not a lie.”

Rook took off the sword that was at his waist.

Still inside the scabbard, he threw his beloved sword to the front. Raising a sound, Rook's beloved sword fell to the ground.

“I am completely disarmed. It's fine even if you tie my arms and legs. That's why, let me have a discussion with your boss.”

In reality, Rook was so scared he couldn't bear.

Every single one of the demons around Rook were more than a head higher than him. Moreover, they had muscles to the point of it being possible to see it over the armor. Those guys were bombarding him with killing intent to the point of making his whole body tremble. For him to be prioritizing throwing his sword away over his life in a situation like this was something close to doing suicide. Of course, Rook had trained hand-to-hand techniques a bit. This was something of his previous world, but the judo he had learned when he was at middle school had been given an “A” score.

...However, he couldn't imagine that bare handed martial arts would work against the

demons surrounding him.

Rook hadn't trained in any techniques that concentrated his demon banning power in his fist. Against those muscular demons, for Rook to challenge them with his thin arms was something absurd. Even if heavens and earth were overturned, it was difficult for him to be victorious.

"...Are you really saying this?"

The demon was a bit surprised by Rook's attitude.

Before one could notice, some of the killing intent was fading away. Was it because showing killing intent became a pain after seeing how stupid Rook was acting? Or then, was it because they intended to report this to the Gortoberuk before acting?

"Yes, it's the truth! I-I... want to talk with your boss. Until I you give me your answer, I won't move one step away from here!!"

Rook declared in a loud voice with all his strength.

Rook was looking at the demons as if he was saying "I did it! How is it now!?", but the demons were looking back at Rook as if they were trying to guess his true intentions. The pressure was to the point that made Rook's feet miserably tremble. Because of this, he started to feel like cowering himself. However, there was no way he could do that. As if repelling the gazes of the demons, Rook glared back.

"..."

How for many minutes have this exchange gone on?

Perhaps, it would be how many seconds.

However, because of how heavy and agonizing these seconds had been, it felt like hours to Rook. Because of that, Rook's breathing started to become rough.

The expression on the faces of the demons in front of his eyes didn't change. In addition,

the gazes that seemed to be looking into Rook became even more oppressive. It was as if Rook's glaring didn't have any effect. It was an dreadful oppressive feeling of an extent like that. Rook's back was soaked in sweat and his legs felt like they would crumble down. His vision gradually started to blur.

He couldn't do it anymore. And when he was about to lose consciousness... it was at that moment.

With the sound of the bushes moving, Rook came back to himself.

The demon that had appeared from the bushes whispered next to the ear of the demon of good physique. Showing an displeased face, he muttered back an "understood" in a small voice that didn't match to his appearance.

"...Follow me, spiritualist."

The demon of good physique turned his back to Rook and started to walk.

Rook wondered whether he had told the demons he was a spiritualist, but right after that, he thought back about the crest of the Barusak that was engraved at his sword. They must have guessed he was a spiritualist from that.

"Come quickly! If you don't, I will beat you down!!"

"Ye-yes!!"

Rook hurriedly followed after him. Because of the hurry, he got his feet a bit entangled and almost fell down. He didn't know what was that about, but whatever it may be, it seemed that his sincere feelings had reached them. Rook became a bit relieved.

After a while walking, they entered inside the forest. There were many tents settled there. Apparently, here was a demon base.

"Are you the spiritualist that said that wanted to talk with me-de gozaru?"  
Suddenly being talked to, Rook stopped his feet.



The one standing there was a tall female demon, and the other demons were standing next to her as if protecting her.

“Y-yes! That’s right!”

Rook’s face became blushed.

Her refined appearance. Her soft black hair. Her cow horns were also extremely cute. However, setting everything aside, before anything, what most caught charmed his eyes were her breasts. Even though they were stuffed inside the armor, the destructive power of its huge size would tell everything.

As expected of the demon that had the most confidence in her bust size in the game. Even among the harem he had been building until now, there was nobody that had such a voluptuous breasts of this extent.

“I am Asty Gortoberuk. I am in charge of these troops-de gozaru. Now then, spiritualist. What business have you come for?”

Rook swallowed a mouthful of saliva.

From now on, things would get serious. It is not the time to be mesmerized by breasts. Slightly shaking his head, he thought of what he should say first.

Asty Gortoberuk.

She was honest and simple. In the game, the relationship with her would start at the worst, with the main character being an enemy that had killed her grandfather. However, after a certain event, they would gradually get along. Once she became obedient, capturing her was easy. She wouldn’t betray the people she trusted. If her intimate friends were to become in danger, even if the person was the enemy, she would give her help as much as possible.

Her only fault would be about how she had the position of the [destructive type heroine] in the game. At the times she would become shy, displaying the super strength inherited from her grandfather, she would send the main character flying up to a hundred meters distant.

“U-uhmm...”

Rook was about to face a girl like her now.

If he rubs her in a wrong way... Surely he won't be let be by only being sent flying by a hundred meters. If he does it badly, he might have his head separated from his body before he can call for Charlotte for her intervention.

“N-nice to meet you. Asty Gortoberuk.”

...For now, he probably should start with the greetings.

A polite greeting was important to construct a good relationship to people, or so Rook had the feeling of being taught at the school of his previous world. Lowering down his head, he said his own name.

“I am called Rook Barusak. Please treat me wewl.”

However, because of the tension, he ended up biting his tongue.

The surroundings suddenly fell silent.

He had done it... Blood left Rook's face.

It seemed that Asty and the other demons also didn't know how to react to that. Asty called for the demon that had brought Rook... And although it seemed that Asty intended to lower down her voice, speaking in a voice Rook could still hear...

“Is... he really Rook Barusak-de gozaru? He is completely different from the intel-de gozaru...”

Asty asked the demon.

“Yes, I think he is the real one. At least, it doesn't seem like he was telling lies.”

“...He is completely different from Riku-dono-de gozaru na. This is to the point of doubting whether they are really siblings that had been born from the same belly.”

“Whether it is his appearance or his character, they are completely different.”

“It kind of makes me feel pity for him-de gozaru yo. Had his character changed after being continuously defeated-de gozaru?”

They were saying very harsh things about him.

Because of the embarrassment, Rook started to think he wanted to stop existing.

“...Well, fine-de gozaru. Now then, what did you want to talk about?”

As if nothing had happened, Asty resumed their talk.

Whether it was Asty’s kindness or because she just wanted to end this quickly, in either case, it was good she had resumed their conversation, ignoring what happened before. While taking care to not bite his tongue, Rook carefully spoke.

“Actually, I would like to have a discussion with the provisional demon lord Charlotte Demonz.”

“Charlotte-de gozaru?”

Asty’s eyebrows suddenly twitched.

Rook leaned his head to the side, also surprised. In the game, Asty was supposed to obsessed in using [sama] when Charlotte was being spoken of. Rook remembered that every time the main character would call Charlotte [Charlotte-chan], Asty would punch him, saying [“This is improper!!”].

What was this about?

“Yes. It is fine if the provisional demon lord decides the place to talk. Besides, I am disarmed and I will be going by myself.”

Rook continued his words with sincerity.

It is written in the books that the demon lord had killed the human king, who had sought an audience with him... However, by playing the game, Rook knew that what really happened was different.

The one who had sought the audience was the Demon Lord, and then he was sealed by the human king.

Because of that, the demons should have become aware of the danger of going to a discussion with the enemy disarmed. His resolve surely must have reached them.

However...

“That is impossible-de gozaru.”

Asty immediately said words of refusal.

Lightly refusing him, his request was heartlessly thrown aside. The faces of the other demons also felt as if “This is impossible” was written on them.

“Why is it? If there is something wrong, I can yield to your conditions as much as it is possible...”

“This is because of a more fundamental reason.”

Asty dropped her shoulders

And then, she spoke words of hopelessness.

“Charlotte has already died-de gozaru yo.”

“Eh...?”

Rook was perplexed.

“Why... Charlotte-chan wasn't supposed to die yet...”

In the game, Charlotte wouldn't have died.

At least, there is no way she would at this timing.

But this was reality.

Whether it was by illness, by depression, or by being murdered.

He could think of many possibilities. This was already a world different from the game after all...

But even so, Rook wanted to know. He wanted to know why she had died.

“...For what reason... has she died.”

Being asked that, Asty twisted her face. As if she was troubled about whether to speak about it, she kept opening and closing her mouth many times.

Finally setting her resolve, she looked at Rook. And then, as if she was about to say something very cruel and difficult to speak of, she weightily moved her mouth.

“Charlotte had committed a crime-de gozaru.”

Crime.

Those words heavily weighed down on Rook.

When he was about to think what kind of thing would be a crime to the demon race, memories of when he had taken prisoner of Charlotte resurfaced.

In the middle of the story of the game when Charlotte and the main character would be talking to each other happily, Charlotte face would suddenly become gloomy and she would say...

“If they knew their provisional demon lord was in good terms with a human... They would definitely have me sentenced for it.”

Rook’s body became heavy and his view started to blur. His whole body started to be covered in cold sweat. His breathing somewhat became disorderly and his hands also started to tremble.

Yes, the crime Charlotte committed for her to be executed was... in other words...

“It was because she had secretly went on a date with you, Rook Barusak.”

With these words spoken, Rook’s view was covered in darkness.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 79**

# 79.THE BOY THAT HAVE DESTROYED FUTURES

At the time Rook woke up, it had been many hours since then.

The first thing he saw when he opened his eyes was an unfamiliar ceiling. It was a ceiling made of iron framework and a somewhat dirty cloth. Sometimes, the cloth would flutter with the wind and it would become possible to see the night sky from the gap of the cloth.

“Where is here?”

“You are inside a tent-de gozaru yo.”

Rook heard someone responding to the words he had unconsciously said.

Turning his eyes to the direction of the voice, the ones standing there were Asty Gortoberuk and her subordinates, gathered inside the tent. Apparently, they were waiting for Rook to wake up.

“You have lost your consciousness-de gozaru.”

“And we carried you here.”

“Really... Why do we need to act as the servants of a human...”

“There is no helping to it. For the moment, he is our guest after all.”

Following Asty words, her subordinates gave their comments about the situation in turns. It seems that the demons were considerably reluctant in treating Rook as a guest, but... it seems that they had been courteously treating him even so. Rook looked down at the blanket covering him. Its color, quality, feeling of touch... No matter what, this was a blanket of first quality for one to be using it for camping.



...Guessing from that, it seems he had been receiving quite the guest of honor treatment.

Becoming aware of the treatment he was receiving, Rook became somewhat relieved.

“Why?”

While grabbing at his blanket, Rook asked in a small voice.

“What do you mean by “why”-de gozaru?”

Asty asked back in a surprised face.

“I mean, it’s weird, isn’t it? I... Uh... Even though I did pretty much the same as killing your provisional demon lord...”

The volume the sentence gradually died down at the end of the sentence.

With a gloomy face, while choosing his next words, Rook spoke of the issue.

“If I didn’t associate myself with Charlotte-chan, she wouldn’t...”

There were two reasons why Rook had approached Charlotte.

The first one was because she was a harem character he liked.

The second one was for the sake of using the position of provisional demon lord.

No matter how one would see, this weren’t actions that was for the sake of the real Charlotte, but for the sake of capturing her as if that was a game.

When Rook would be becoming intimate with Charlotte and was increasing her affection levels, Charlotte would meet with the heroine that was accompanying Rook. Being an exceptional spiritualist, she would notice that Charlotte was a demon in an instant and become hostile to her. Because of that, Rook would successfully annihilate Charlotte’s escorts and activate the event to capture Charlotte.

Everything was for the sake of stopping the resurrection of the Demon Lord, or otherwise, defeating him.

...However, was this kind of development really necessary?

At that time, he didn't think too much over it, but... if he was to just become in good terms with Charlotte and just bid farewell after that... Perhaps her subordinates wouldn't have died.

Perhaps all the spiritualists that had perished at the city of Derufoi wouldn't have needed to die.

Perhaps Kurumi and Rebecca wouldn't have died.

To begin with, wasn't there the choice of not approaching Charlotte?

Even though the defeat of the coalition army of the Barusak and Bistolru became expected, Rook went to play around at Derufoi without taking any measures against the demons who had taken their initiative. Because of this, he received complaints from his subordinates. If thinking calmly about it, even though his subordinates were correct, he completely ignored their important advice and went out to play.

This was because there wasn't the choice of not going to Derufoi.

If he didn't go to Derufoi, the story of the game wouldn't develop.

Rook's heart fell even more into the darkness.

He should have noticed that [the game was developing in a different way] at the time Selestinna had died. He was supposed to have become aware that this wasn't [the world of a game], but [reality].

No, actually, he should have noticed this much before... He should have become aware of this ever since he had let Riku Barusak die...

“Charlotte’s future... Everyone’s future... I destroyed all of it!!”

“Future-de gozaru?”

Because of Rook’s scream, Asty let out a confused voice.

“Rather than you having destroyed it or anything... To begin with, isn’t future something you don’t know about-de gozaru?”

Asty spoke as if this was the obvious.

Rook shook his head. If he was to talk to Asty about the [things about the game], there would be no way she would believe him, and she wouldn’t be able to understand it either way. That’s why Rook was saying it as if this was a [supposition].

“But, what if I..! What if I hadn’t met with Charlotte-chan!?”

“There is no meaning to hypothetical things. That’s because it is something that won’t happen after all-de gozaru.”

Asty continued her words.

“It is a fact that Charlotte had become friends with you-de gozaru; it is a fact that she isn’t here anymore-de gozaru. In that case, all you have to do is to acknowledge that and and keep living the present, building up over what you experienced-de gozaru.”(TL note:Better way to phrase this up? 0.0 なら、その事実をふまえて、今を進んでいくだけでござる)

“To... live the present?”

“This is the reason you came here, isn’t it, Rook-dono?”

Asty showed a complex expression in her face.

It felt like the expression someone would look at the enemy with, but it was also like the

expression one would look at a friend, and moreover, it looked like an expression of someone that was looking at a child that didn't know of anything as well.

“Besides, regardless of what happened at your past, you are merely a human that is seeking an audience-de gozaru. If I was to treat a guest badly, it would taint the honor of the Demon Lord army-de gozaru yo.”

Now, speak of your objective.

Asty was silently urging.

“To live the present... is it?”

Rook was showing a wry smile.

Yes, that was exactly it. He had indirectly destroyed Riku's life, and because of that, Selestinna, Kurumi and the others had died. But this was the past. In order to atone for his sins, he needed to live the present. Wasn't this the reason why he was able to go on a journey without losing himself on how he was banished from the royal capital?

“I...”

After thinking about that, it felt as if heavy chains that had been enveloping his heart broke up.

“I have come in order to with Charlotte.”

Little by little, Rook started to talk about the reason for him

“One way or another, I would like to negotiate having the princess back still alive. And besides that... This is a personal thing, but... I would like to apologize to Riku-ane once again.”

“To Riku-dono?”

Asty's eyebrows twitched.

"I don't really want to say it, but I don't think you would be able to reconcile."

"I don't mind."

Rook has set his resolve to be killed by Riku.

Riku Barusak hated Rook to the point that killing him wouldn't be enough. His words will definitely not affect her. No matter how much sincerity he was to apologize with, what he had done was something that had no pardoning to begin with. He had already experienced it with his body well enough to know about this fact.

But even so, he wanted to apologize to her.

If he had saved Riku at that time, perhaps everybody's future wouldn't have been destroyed.

Even if he had decided to [live the present], there was no way he could avert his eyes to the cause of all this, to how he had [left Riku to her death]. Because of that, he decided in his heart that atoning for this sin was of his utmost priority.

"I don't mind even if she kills me. If her anger calms down by having me killed, then... I would be able to atone for my sin."

However, there were things he needed to do before that.

"However, I need to save the princess before that. This was a task entrusted to me, and this time, I want to properly carry it out."

In honesty, when Rook had looked at the princess not as a game character, but as an actual living human, his feelings of wanting to marry her weren't as strong.

However, the princess was entrusted for him to save. Until now, Rook had been casually doing all of his missions as if they were only [a game event]. In result of him doing his tasks in accord to the playing guide of the game without thinking too deeply, most of it

ended up terribly.

That's why he wanted to complete his mission this time.

He wanted to put effort in finally having some responsibility over the task that was entrusted to him.

"...The task that was entrusted to you...-de gozaru?"

Lightly leaning his chin onto her hand, Asty started to think.

Then, finally... as if she was exhausted, she let out a long sigh.

"Sorry, but the matter about the princess is not something I can carelessly decide about-de gozaru. This needs to be brought up in the next meeting to be discussed about... For now, would Rook-dono mind to wait until the meeting is finished-de gozaru?"

"No, I don't mind. I also don't mind being tied by ropes if necessary."

"No, as I said before, Rook-dono is a guest, and doing something like that... That's right!"

Asty put her hands together as if she had a brilliant idea. The expression from before completely changed, becoming the expression of an innocent child.

"It will take a considerable amount of time until the meeting reaches a decision. However, it would be too boring for you to be waiting here with nothing to do. How about this-de gozaru? What if Rook-dono goes to the festival at Derufoi and kill time while the meeting isn't over?"

—

"...Was this really ok?"

After Rook Barusak had already been sent to Derufoi city, one of Asty's subordinates asked.

"Isn't it too dangerous to let a human free in a human city? If he runs away..."

"We will be monitoring him, so there will be no problems-de gozaru yo."

Asty answered as if this was nothing important.

In fact, Asty was planning on taking part in the monitoring.

"Besides, Rook Barusak being there is nothing more than a bait for us to catch Keity Foster-de gozaru yo."

"Bait, you say?"

The subordinate leaned his head to the side. Somewhat filled with satisfaction, Asty started to explain her own plan.

"Keity should know that Rook Barusak and Charlotte had an intimate relationship. There is a high chance that she will attempt to get in contact with Rook Barusak by some means-de gozaru."

Asty didn't know if Keity thought of Rook Barusak as[the one that made her lord be cornered to death], her worst enemy, or as someone that also held Charlotte dear.

In either case, there is no mistake that once Keity spots Rook at the city, she will come to contact him in some way.

"If we can catch the fish with our bait, we will be able to save the time we would spend looking for her-de gozaru."

"I see. As expected of the grandchild of Gortoberuk-sama!!"

Asty became euphoric with the words of praise from her subordinate. While scrubbing her nose, she puffed her chest with pride.

However, at that time... She overlooked a big hole in her plan.

Indeed, she was going to catch the fish using her bait.

But she overlooked the fact that there was another fish nearby that could catch the bait instead.



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 80**

# 80.DERUFOI, ONCE AGAIN

The city of Derufoi was filled with liveliness.

The sun hasn't risen yet, but the city was in a festive mood full of disorder.

Although the sound of the spectacular musical performance at the parade and the sound of the singing voice of drunk people that was out of tone to the musical notes, and also the jumbled up and dissonant sound of the shouts of the peddlers filled the surroundings with turmoil, the expressions of the people coming and going through the main street were all smiling. It was as if they had forgot about the strife of washing blood with blood that happened some months ago.

“Now, now, come and see! The fire ring jumping that is rarely seen in the world!”

A clown wearing a red and green costume was performing tricks with a ring of fire. It seems that he was having an animal he had trained go through the ring of fire. Next to him, there was a big man wearing cat ears, playing the fool and walking while playing a trumpet. Behind him, there was a boy decorated in feathers swinging his drumsticks at a small drum, and behind him.... the magnificent masquerade parade went on.

Everyone was looking at the lively parade and the other performances with smiles.

...But to the parade which was making everyone excited, there was only person... A small girl that was glaring at it with an extremely cold eyes.

“...So carefree... This city.”

The small girl, Riku Barusak, muttered. Bored, while having her hand inside her pocket, she made her way through the crowd of people.

“I think it is good, though? It is good for relieving some stress.”

The rabbit eared boy, Roppu Nezaarand, said. Roppu's eyes were fixed at the parade. His big round eyes wouldn't stop looking at it. As if the parade was something extremely interesting, his eyes were sparkling. Riku gave a glance at the parade as if she was looking at some worthless thing. The parade didn't impress Riku. Once again taking her eyes away from the parade, Riku looked ahead.

"This is running away from reality. It's simply that."

Riku kept walking, strongly stepping at the pavement on each step. While walking, she started to think that the city of Derufoi hadn't changed since the last time she had come. There wouldn't be any city that would have changed when not even one year had passed, but she didn't think that the city wouldn't have changed at all. It felt as if only this city had been unaffected by the time.

"..."

Its food stalls, its clamor; nothing changed.

The only difference from that time was that now it was a refreshing blue sky and the autumnal weather. Other than that, it would be Riku's own mental state. It felt to her that she had been a bit more excited than now in the last time she had come to Derufoi. Where had these feelings gone to? While pondering about that, she adjusted the position of the halberd at her back.

"Then, Roppu. Is it around here?"

While holding the letter, Riku asked Roppu. Hurriedly opening the map, Roppu checked their location.

"Ye-yes. It is at the shop at the next turn."

"...I see. Thank you."

Riku glanced through her surroundings.

Even though Derufoi was crowded with people because of the costume festival, it didn't change the fact that this was a human city. Leaving the command of her troops to Vrusto

and bringing only the messengers Roppu and Karula together with her, she sneaked inside the city. Because Karula was at standby outside the city, actually only Riku and Roppu had gone inside the city.

...In other words, there were no demons other than Roppu in the city.

The only person the spiritualists would aim for would be Roppu. It was necessary to have him disguise himself so that the spiritualists wouldn't be able to guess he was a demon. Originally, except for his rabbit ears, Roppu's appearance resembled one of a human. If he was insist those ears were only a [headgear], in most of the cases, they would be able to fool the spiritualists. But if they were still suspecting them despite that, just like the time she had hid Keity Foster from the spiritualists, Riku could simply use the fact she was a human.

Riku was a human. Because of that, it wasn't necessary for the spiritualists to aim for her life.

However, after the incident at the royal capital, the possibility that the fact [Riku Barusak was alive] had become known to the spiritualists wasn't small. In fact, when they had launched an attack at the [land the Demon Lord was sealed] some days ago, Riku had heard some spiritualists talking about Riku. In case Riku's appearance was informed to the common spiritualists, Riku wouldn't be able to use the fact she was a human and trick them. Rather, this would only be more evidence for them to doubt Roppu was a demon.

Because of that, the need to be more cautious than the previous time she had come here increased.

“...Ah!?”

Right after Riku finished confirming that there was nobody suspicious at the surroundings, Roppu let out a confused voice.

“What is it?”

“Just now, I saw Asty-san there!”

“Asty?”

Riku's eyes arrived at the place Roppu was looking at.

At that direction, there was a stall grilling skewered meat. Although this really was the type of stall Asty was fond of, there was no way she could be at Derufoi. Riku had ordered her to do an investigation back at the possible location of the seal of the Demon Lord. If the information Riku had was correct, Asty should have gone to a cavern at the south that was two days away from here by horse. No matter how much she strained herself, there was no way she would have been able to come here in time.

"It should be someone else that looked like her. She is in a mission right now after all."

"Is that so? ....I was certain it was the Asty-san herself... But that is right. There is no way she could be here, right? I am very sorry."

"That's right. There is no way she could be here."

For Roppu to have said that, Riku became a bit worried about his words.

Vrusto was a demon that would play jokes all the time, but Roppu was an earnest young soldier that wouldn't do something like that. He wouldn't speak of vague information to her, speaking of it only after he confirmed it himself, and when he would speak of vague things, he would meekly speak about it in a jumbled way.

But this time, he had properly said he had seen Asty. Since he had said it properly, he should have really seen Asty. Probably, it wasn't simply someone that looked like her, but actually the person herself.

Riku glanced through the crowd of people one more time.

However, she couldn't find anyone that looked like Asty. Asty wouldn't be able to completely hide her tall stature amidst the crowd, so she either went to hide somewhere else or hurriedly ran away once she noticed Roppu had spotted her. In either case, from what Riku could see, it didn't seem like she was around here.

"...Has it been leaked that I was going to be here?"

Riku wondered.(TL note: I don't know what this is supposed to mean リクは口の中で反芻した:/ What is this口の中? ーー)

The information about the letter Roppu had delivered to her... Or rather, the information about this secret message was only known by Riku, Roppu and Vrusto. She had given only an ambiguous explanation to Karula, who was now at standby outside the city. It was possible that the more other demons knew about this, the more dangerous it would become in case this was a trap. Because of that, Riku had carefully decided the day she would come here, and so, it was supposed to have gone well.

Why had Asty found out about this information?

No, if it is Asty that it is being talked about, it felt like she would come to where Riku was even if she had to push her way through the crowd of people, and then coming forward to help her. Despite of that, for her to not have done that, it was possible to imagine that she had a reason for why she needed to hide herself.

...What in the world could her situation be for her to need to hide herself from her superior officer she was in direct command of?

After pondering about it after some time, Riku lowered her voice by one level and spoke.

“Roppu... Let's decide on a signal.”

With the signs enjoyment fading away from his eyes, they had become filled with seriousness.

“Listen, the real intention behind this letter is unknown. It might be a trap. That's why just in case something unexpected happens, I will go inside the shop by myself.”

With Riku saying that, Roppu showed a worried face. Originally, it was supposed for him to go together with Riku as a witness for her, but because Asty was doing something suspicious, she needed to be as much careful as she could. With how the situation became like that, Riku regretted she hadn't brought at least one more trustworthy subordinate here.

“Will I be waiting for you outside?”

“As a lookout. If any problem happens, I will come to you right away, so don’t worry. Right... Whistle twice to call me.”

Riku whispered next to Roppu’s ears.

Once she gets inside the shop, she could only count on her hearing to catch the signal. Sure enough, she didn’t know how meaningful this would be in the middle of so much noise, but this was the best thing possible.

“Alright?”

“Yes, understood. Please, be careful.”

Silently lowering down his head, Roppu took some distance from Riku. Once again wrapping herself in an indifferent mood, Riku increased her guard over the surroundings.

She didn’t spot any suspicious person or anyone that looked like Asty. ...However, she felt some kind of bad feeling. Was she overthinking it? While wondering about that, Riku pushed the door of the shop.

“Welcome.”

Right after entering the shop, Riku was elegantly greeted by the shop attendant. Just like the other shops, most of its clients were wearing costumes. However, differently from the shops she had went in before, the attendant wasn’t wearing a costume.

Telling the shop attendant she had an appointment, she was guided to a private room.

“It has been a long time.”

At the private room, the other party had already been waiting for her.

Confirming there wasn’t anyone at the rooms next to that one, Riku closed the door. That private room was well distant from the other rooms. With that, the possibility of someone eavesdropping should be low. Even if someone came, there wouldn’t be any problems of

people hearing their conversation. (TL note: 他に誰かやってこないか耳を立てていれば、なにも問題ない。 Not sure about what this means.)

“Yes, it has been.”

Riku put the letter on the table. And then, she tapped with her finger at the part she had been intrigued with.

“I will tell you the real location of where the Demon Lord was sealed.”

Riku read out loud the sentence she was tapping on. As if she was guessing her real intentions, Riku glared at her intensely.

“You, who is a human... What are you planning on doing, priestess of the blindness... Shibira-san?”



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 81**

# 81.THE TURNING POINT

“Yes, it is just as you’ve said.”

The priestess of blindness, Shibira, showed a faint smile with her lips.

Her clothes didn’t change much from the last time Riku had seen her. She had a pure and white fabric enveloping her body and the white like silk hair that extended to her back, and just like at that time before, her eyes were still kept closed.

“Do you want some tea and sweets?”

There was tea and baked sweets at the table front of Shibira. It had been elegantly prepared for them. There were no signs they had been touched. In the worst case, there could be poison or some other drug in the food. Riku shook her head.

“I don’t. More importantly, for what reason you thought writing me that you would tell me the [location where the Demon Lord was sealed] was a good idea?”

Riku gave a look of doubt at Shibira.

Riku couldn’t think of any merit for Shibira to tell Riku of the [real location of the seal].

The only merit she could think of was pretty much Shibira telling them the real location of the seal in exchange for her safety to be guaranteed.

If the Demon Lord was to be resurrected, it is possible the humans might end up all killed. And when it happens, the possibility she would be an exception to that was extremely low. That is why she might have made her move in order to protect her own safety.

Only, although not exactly, one way or another she was a priestess, and at the time she would weight her own life and the life of many people, would she really choose herself before others? No, it wasn’t possible to think she would.

In that case, why would she tell Riku the location of the seal? Until Riku got here, she had been pondering about this, but in the end, she couldn't think of an answer that made sense.

“Would you be planning on having spiritualists ambush us for a decisive attack once we get at the place?”

“No, I am not thinking of such thing.”

Shibira shook her head.

“My eyes see the future. This action is only in accordance to the future I've seen.”

Shibira lightly pressed at her own eyes. (TL note: With her fingers I guess? .-. ) Her expression was very lonely. Would that mean she had seen something in particular with her eyes? Before Riku could ask this, Shibira started to speak once again.

“The location of the seal is written here.”

Shibira put a document onto the table. The location where the Demon Lord was sealed should be inside it. Riku moved her hand to take the document, but Shibira didn't take her hand from it.

“However, I have only one condition before I can give it to you.”

Riku thought “See? Here it is”.

There was no way Shibira would easily give Riku such an important information that easily. There was no mistake she is going to come with a condition that Riku and the other demons wouldn't be able to meet. Or perhaps, would she really be asking for her safety after the resurrection of the Demon Lord?

After confirming once again there were no signs of people spying on them, Riku took her hand from the document.

“Fine, tell your conditions.”

“It is an easy thing to do.”

Still with her hand on the document, Shibira calmly told Riku the condition.

“I would like to ask you one more time.... whether you really don’t intend on leaving the Demon Lord army.”

“...Is that all?”

“Yes.”

Riku became open-mouthed.

Why was Shibira asking her such an obvious question that she was already supposed to know the answer? Riku wondered if there was a deeper meaning in those words, but she couldn’t imagine of anything in particular.

“Now is the turning point. If you make the choice to leave the Demon Lord army, it will be possible to change the future where [death] awaits you.”

“Turning point, right?”

Riku muttered in a bored manner.

Sometimes, Vrusto would be recalling her about it, saying things like “Ojou-chan, it’s fine even if it is only for this year. Don’t you think it is better if you retire from the Demon Lord army for now?” or “What do you think about that thing of your determined death?”, but Riku didn’t mind about it this much. Of course, if someone was to ask her if she was scared, she wouldn’t be able to deny. However, she had the feeling she wasn’t scared to that point.

“There is no way I can quit the army just because of something like the prophecy of my death.”

Riku flatly declared.

“If my resolve was only to this extent, I would have deserted and died a dog’s death long ago. I will use the life that was picked up by captain Leivein for his sake until my last moments. I won’t have any regrets about it.”

While putting her hand at her chest, Riku told Shibira the reason.

In the end, both humans and demons will die someday.

Moreover, the lifespan of a human was only half of a demon’s. Since it is already decided Riku was going to die someday, in that case, she wanted to be of use to Leivein until she died. Of course, it was unlikely that Leivein would wake up while Riku was still alive. If she couldn’t remain alive through this winter, she wouldn’t be able to hear Leivein’s voice once again. This felt somewhat lonely. However, in order for Leivein to praise her once he wakes up, Riku would continue maintaining the army and unseal the Demon Lord.

This was what she could do for the sake of making Leivein’s ideals become true; it was her duty. Even if she was to die tomorrow, she would do all she could up to her last moments, and if anything would result from it, it would be enough.

“...I understand. If this is the future you chose to follow, I won’t stop you. Please, feel free to continue going in this way.”

Shibira slowly moved her hand from the document and handed it over to Riku.

“Do you love Leivein Adlar?”

When Riku’s finger was about to touch the document, Shibira spoke. Those words stopped her from moving further.

“Eh?”

Riku looked at Shibira’s eyes. Her eyes were still tightly shut. However, her expression was extremely serious. Undoubtedly, she was asking this from her true feelings. When

Riku realized what Shibira had said, she unconsciously broke up in laughs.

“Pu-hahahahahhahhah.”

Riku ended up laughing, putting her hands on her stomach. She knew it was an impolite reaction for the serious question of someone else, but it was so weird she couldn't hold herself back from laughing. Because of how much she ended up laughing, her eyes ended up becoming teary.

“Sorry. I just got a bit surprised.”

While lightly wiping her tears, Riku apologized to Shibira.

“Even though you are a priestess, you really have interest in worldly things. It was unexpected.”

Shibira also had part of the fault for asking such a worldly question.

While thinking that, Riku took the document. Unfolding it, Riku could see the information of the location of the seal written in delicate letters. Once she went back to where Vrusto was, she would immediately send scouts to the area.

“Thank you for that. I will be taking it.”

While showing the document, she said her parting words to Shibira.

And it was at that time.

“Hm?”

The faint sound of whistling reached Riku's ears two times.

This was the signal she had decided with Roppu before. No matter how much of an excellent of a spy one could be, there was no way someone would be able to mimic the signal that sounded close to whisperings right on the moment. (TL note: ?? It would make

sense if it was because of the crowd being loud outside, but this is talking about imitating... Is Roppu whistling in some secret ninja way or something? T.T)

Something had happened to Roppu.

“Goodbye, Shibira.”

“Goodbye Riku Barusak. May your future be blessed.”

While feeling Shibira’s prayers behind her back, Riku rushed out of the room.

Roppu became in danger. If not that, something similar to a dangerous situation had happened. Maybe the cause for it was Asty, who he had spotted before, or perhaps it was something else.

Regardless of what it was, Riku decided to think about it once she got there.

—

“...I went together with Chatlotte-chan at that stall...”

This was at the same time Riku was talking with Shibira.

Rook Barusak leaned against a tree that was at the side of the street.

Even though the lively parade was passing through him right in front of him, he didn’t even bat his eyes to it. Rook was looking at the shoot the target stall at the other side of the road. It was the place he had met Charlotte in real life for the first time. Among all he had done until now, Rook could only see this shoot the target stall, which was shining, while everything else was fading away.

With the shopkeeper being busy managing the stall, it seemed like his shoot the target business was flourishing. There were no signs of him noticing Rook, who was looking at

him from the distance. In case he did notice him, there wouldn't be any way he would remember Rook had come to his stall before.

“...If I hadn't met Charlotte-chan at that stall... Ha...”

Rook seemed to be pressed by his guilt.

“It haven't been even one year.”

While looking at the leaves dyed in red of the trees at the roadside, he blankly stood there, thinking about those things.

At that day, he had the feeling that it had been so cold to the point he wondered if it was snowing. He had the feeling that at that day, he had many clothes stacked up under his coat. Rook had invited Cellia Buryuuser in place of Selestinna. At the time they were enjoying the circus, Rook had told a lie to Cellia, saying he was going to the toilet, and headed to the shoot the target stall Charlotte would be at. After he had showed his skills at target shooting...

“Ah!?”

“Of, brother. Sorry there...”

A boy stumbled at Rook, raising a loud sound with the impact.

It was a plain looking boy who wasn't wearing any costume. With his hands inside his pocket, the boy ran into the crowd of people. Seeming like he was in hurry, the boy immediately vanished from his view.

“Well, since he apologized, it is fine I guess... Hm?”

At that time, Rook felt a strange feeling of loss.

It felt as if his pockets somewhat became lighter. Moving his hand to his pocket, Rook noticed a certain important fact.



“M-my wallet is not here!!”

Rook couldn't feel the weight that was supposed to be at his pocket. The money he had prepared for his journey was not there anymore.

“Where did it fall down? It should have been here... Hm, ah!”

The image of the boy from before surfaced in the back of Rook's mind. Rook remembered the boy had stumbled at him shoulder to shoulder at the street. However, the place Rook was at was somewhere where he wouldn't be a bother for the other people walking there. He had leant his back at a tree at the side of the street, half assimilating himself to the scenery. Normally, would people really stumble at someone like that?

“That's bad, I've been stolen by that kid!!”

Rook hurriedly started to run to the direction the boy had disappeared to.

However, no matter where he was to look at, only people covered his view. Moreover, everyone was wearing weird eye catching costumes now. No matter how he tried, his attention would end up getting shifted to the people wearing those costumes, so it was difficult for him to spot that boy who was wearing plain clothes.

“Ah- really, where did he go to!? That brat!!”

“Rook Barusak?”

It was right at the moment Rook Barusak had shouted.

A sharp voice was directed to him from behind. Its tone felt as if it was condemning him, inquiring why he was here.

Rook slowly turned back.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 82**

## 82.THE CYCLE OF REVENGE

The person standing there had a tall figure.

It was an weird looking person that was wrapped in gray cloths, and his gender couldn't be identified. All Rook was able to notice was that his pair of eyes clearly didn't look at him in a favorable impression.

“Uhm... Who would you be?”

Rook ended up completely overwhelmed by the pressure that was being given by the person. Without knowing what he should do, Rook decided to ask who the person was, having both of his hands clenched.

When Rook asked the person that, it felt as if that person became very shocked. With his eyes wide-open, he falteringly stepped back.

“Don't you remember me!?”

“Ah, uhm... Please, wait a moment. I will remember right away.”

With his hand in his forehead, Rook silently looked at the person in front of his eyes.

After narrowing down people by the height of that person, he couldn't think of anyone in his memory that had corresponded to it. After pondering for a while, Rook set his resolve.

“Yes, I remembered it! You were that person from that time, right? Iya, it really has been a long time!”

Rook decided to act as if he knew that person. Because he didn't know that person, he spoke in an ambiguous way. If Rook was to keep talking to the person just like that, he would eventually be able to remember him.

“... You remembered, didn't you?”

“Of course. Iya, it really has been very long. Have you been well?”

“Yes, I've been, thank you.”(TL note: I'm not sure how to translate this -. ->おかげさまで<- The translation literally means “Yes, I'm fine” when asking “How are you?”. The problem is that this might be meaning something else instead of the literal meaning in this case... Not sure, I am just getting the feeling)

The tension in the tone of the person gradually increased. Have Rook saying he knew the person got the opposite results? Rook felt his face gradually becoming stiff.

“Uhh... Ummm, sorry.”

He didn't know well why it happened, but he thought he should apologize for now. Having decided he would do that, he lightly lowered his head.

“As if I would let you pass by just with an apology.”

Holding Rook by his neck, the person raised him up. On the tip of his feet, Rook was barely touching the ground. When they got close enough to the point where both were about to have each other's noses touching, Rook was able to finally notice the person was a woman.

“Eh, eh!?”

“Because of you... It's because you tricked Charlotte-sama that Charlotte-sama has died.”

With a voice deep to the point of being scary, she pressed Rook with her words.

“Charlotte!?”

Rook finally noticed the woman in front of his eyes was a demon, and also noticed she was someone that idolized Charlotte.

“I see, so that’s how it is...”

Rook understood now.

This was something Asty Gortoberuk had plotted.

Inside the game, Asty Gortoberuk was very polite to provisional demon lord, and there were many scenes where she would treat her with care. That’s why Rook was able to understand [the revenge for creating a reason for Charlotte to be killed] in Asty’s point of view.

“To meet someone that adored Charlotte-chan in the place I’ve passed my last moments with her. Hahaha, indeed, this is very rough...”

Rook grasped the hand that was holding his neck.

“Sorry. I’ve done something I can’t make up to. I don’t know... how I am supposed to apologize to you. That’s why, please, beat me.”  
Rook set his resolve.

He didn’t imagine she would forgive him just by him letting himself be beaten. Besides, even if she was to beat down Rook, who was the one to cause all of this, Charlotte wouldn’t be coming back, in the same way Selestinna and Rebecca wouldn’t be coming back either.

“The things I have done to Charlotte-chan... The pain you are feeling because of all this... I want to understand it, even if it is only a little! If I can lessen your pain by letting you hit me, I don’t mind being beaten!”

Rook didn’t like pain, but he felt that he wouldn’t be a man if he ran away now. No, if he was to deny this woman’s pain and make up some weird excuse, then he would be only a human waste. Rook tightly shut his eyes.

“You...”

The tremble of the hand that was holding him by his neck told everything. Bracing himself, Rook prepared himself for the impact.

”...This is the revenge for Charlotte-sama!!

Together with a roaring sound, Rook’s cheek was slapped with great force.

The slap unleashed with her well trained muscles by Charlotte’s close aide, a tiger demon that would be made fun of by being called macho woman, had dealt an excessive amount of damage to Rook. While spinning around, his body was sent flying to the main street. With many of the people getting caught up by him along the way, Rook hit the wall of a building.

“G-gh... It hurts...”

Dizzy, Rook waveringly stood up.

Rook’s soul was of a weak good-for-nothing Japanese college student, but his body was one of a main character. There was no possibility of him dying just by being sent into a wall, and he hadn’t even broken any bones.

“I... really didn’t die to that.”

But even so, it didn’t change the fact that the pain he was feeling was worse than what he had ever felt until now.

While rubbing his back, Rook moaned in pain. And then, before he could be aware of, Keity Foster got in front of his eyes, standing in his way.

“Hou, for you to still be fine after one of my attacks.”

“N-no, this isn’t really being fine...”

“This is Charlotte-sama’s pain!! May you taste it, you foul spiritualist!!!”

Keity unleashed another attack at Rook's stomach.

With his body being sank into the wall, Rook's view started becoming filled with stars.

"What?"

"Is this a brawl?"

"Wow, how flashy."

The people that were enjoying themselves in their costumes started to gradually gather around the surroundings. As if they were going to see the play of a circus, they started to draw in close to Rook and Keity.

Keity didn't notice the situation of her surroundings and kept savagely hitting Rook.

"May you know Charlotte-sama's pain! The pain of being thrown away after being toyed by you is not of this extend!"

Every time Keity ended a sentence, she would send a slap or a punch at Rook. Without any resistance, Keity's attack would hit Rook's face or stomach. Gradually increasing the intensity of her attacks, the cheers of the people of Derufoi started to increase.

"Uwa... It looks like the womanizing of that handsome guy was too much for his own good...."

"Yes, hit him more!"

"Make him beyond recovery!"

The humans were cheering for Keity. Whistling of cheering was also heard. When it had become to that point, Keity finally came back to herself.

"Tch, for me to receive cheers from humans... How humiliating."

Keity clenched her teeth.

She clenched the fist that was hitting Rook's face even more tightly.

"...Have you really regretted what you had done?"

Keity asked Rook. Rook's face was full of bruises. Surely, even if someone that knew him was to see him now, the person wouldn't be able to recognize it was him right away.

"...Of course."

Moving his swollen lips, Rook spoke of his true feelings. Hearing those words, Keity briefly thought about something.

"Hey, spiritualist. Don't you hate this world that had stolen Charlotte-sama's life?"

In order to not let the other humans notice what she was speaking, Keity lowered her voice and asked Rook.

"Indeed, it was because Charlotte-sama became involved with you spiritualists that she had been executed. However, if you truly care about Charlotte-sama... Then, we shall destroy this world that has killed Charlotte-sama together!"

"The world... that killed Charlotte-chan?"

When Rook moved his lips, Keity once again grasped him at his neck. Lifting him up as if she was going to throw Rook somewhere, she approached her mouth next to his ears.

"Yes, it's revenge. Let's destroy the current Demon Lord army, which had tricked Charlotte into her death, the spiritualists, and also that shitty annoying red haired demon!!"

"This..."



“Do you think it is impossible!?”

Keity pressed Rook down to the ground.

With cracks appearing at the pavement, Rook sank into the ground

“Sorry, I can’t agree to your… request.”

While coughing, Rook looked at Keity.

“Revenge… is something that is not good.”

Rook hated the demon race that had killed Selestinna.

He hated the demon race that had killed Rebecca, Kurumi and his head maid, Mary, to the point of wanting to kill them. He detested them so much that it wouldn’t be enough if he tore the limbs of each of them with his own hands.

However, the one who brutally killed all those heroines was the heroine he had thrown away, Riku Barusak.

Being thrown away, bearing hatred to Rook and the spiritualists during those ten years… Riku was recruited into the Demon Lord army, which was supposed to be their enemy, and had been refining her blade of vengeance. The fear Rook felt at the moment that sharp blade was pointed at him was something that he would remember every time before going to sleep.

“It’s not good to seek revenge.”

Rook thought. Surely, if his feelings had led him to kill Riku at that time… No, he didn’t know if he would be able to kill Riku with his own strength, but if he had to killed her, what would things have become like?

Perhaps someone that cared about Riku in the same way Rook cared for Selestinna would start looking for the opportunity to kill him.

“Revenge only calls for more revenge. This is an infinite loop. That’s why... if you don’t cut yourself off from this cycle of killing and being killed...”

Rook waveringly stood up.

The inside his mouth was becoming filled with blood.

“I want to see a world where everyone can be happy. I’ve decided this is the only reason I am going to draw my sword for!”

“You damned idealist!!”

Loudly roaring, Keity amassed strength at her fist. Because of how much strength was in her fist, being in clad in a thunderous wind blow, the fist carried a capability of dealing fatal damage to Rook it hadn’t until now.(TL note: Improvisation -.- ->轟音の風を纏い = ???)

“I won’t forget what you’ve done to Charlotte-sama! I will have her revenge on everyone that drove her to her death! If you are going to side with them, then I will truly have you stop breathing!!”

Keity seriously attacked Rook.

Because of the impact, the pavement was smashed and the surroundings were filled with white smoke from the dust. Together with the thundering sound, the spectators started to raise screams because of the fragments of stone that flew around.

“Hmph, you childish spiritualist.”

Keity was showing a smile and was certain of her victory.

“Why have you ran away from prison, macho woman?”

From the other side of the white smoke, a red haired person approached Keity. Because of

how surprised Keity Foster was, she became stiffen.

“Why you!? Why are you here!?”

“Well, it doesn’t matter, right?”

The sound of something being swung was heard from inside the dust. With the smoke being blown by the wind, the figure of that person became clear.

It was the figure of a girl that felt out-of-place to this city.

With her small body and her ominous red hair tied up, she brandished her huge halberd. However, there wasn’t any arm through the right sleeve of her clothes. In other words, it was an one-armed girl.

“Sorry, but this human is my toy.”

Riku Barusak.

It was Rook Barusak’s elder sister, and the girl that had cornered the provisional demon lord Charlotte Keity respected to her death. Riku Barusak had calmly entered at the stage.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 83**

# 83.THE SIN FOR PUTTING YOUR HAND ON SOMEONE'S TOY

“Riku...Ane?”

Rook couldn't believe the scene that was happening before his eyes.

A hair red like a ripen apple was fluttering in front of him. This had happened right before the attack reached Rook. Getting in front of Keity, the red haired girl had pushed aside the blow Keity had used all her strength at.

Because of that, the direction of Keity's attack had changed, hitting the paved ground. Because of the dust that had risen, it wasn't possible to see the surroundings well.

“Riku-ane? It is Riku-ane, right!?”

But Rook knew.

Rook knew the name of the girl holding the halberd.

“Why did you save me?”

With a trembling voice, Rook called for Riku Barusak.

As far as he was concerned, Riku hated him. No, it went beyond hating him. Riku hated Rook very much for how he had betrayed her at their childhood, and certainly resented that. In fact, it had been only a few months since he had been completely rejected by Riku.

“Riku-ane, tell me. Why did you save me?””

Did any changes happened to Riku's heart in these few months?

Had she become willing to forgive Rook, who had betrayed her? With a gaze full of expectation, Rook looked at Riku's small back.

"That's obvious."

Riku didn't turn back to him.

Even more now that the white smoke had cleared away, Riku's eyes were looking straight at Keity Foster.

"There is no way I can let you die here."

"Riku-ane!"

A smile appeared at Rook's face.

Rook's sincere feelings had finally reached Riku. Rook felt he was safe now. He had the feeling that the stained part of his heart was gradually being cleansed. However....

"If you die here, I won't be able to have fun later, right?"

Even looking at Riku from her back, Rook was able clearly feel it.

A feeling of killing intent filled with insanity came from Riku's back.

"It will be inconvenient to carry you, so let's have your arms and legs cut off later, okay? It's alright, I won't kill you right away. I have many things I want to tell you after all."

With the tone of voice of a innocent child that was playing with her favorite toy, Riku spoke. Rook wasn't able to tell what expression Riku had in her face, but she was surely showing an smile so broad to the point that her mouth would tear apart.

Taking back everything he had thought just now, the feeling of comfort had vanished in an

instant.

“The sin of putting your hand onto one of my toys is heavier than prison breaking, you know... Keity Foster.”

Riku moved her halberd next to Keity’s throat. It was possible to hear the sound of Keity clenching her teeth. Clenching her fists, Keity was intensely glaring at Riku.

“Riku Barusak, why are you here!? Could it be... that you had been working with the humans?”

Keity’s ferocious eyes were even more intense than moments ago. The killing intent that couldn’t be compared to the one that had been directed to Rook was now being aimed at Riku. Because of the density of killing intent, even the air started to tremble.

“Haven’t you heard what I’ve just said now? This guy is someone I want to have revenge on. It is a toy I had let escape before, you know? It is impossible for me to join forces with this thing even if the sky and the earth were overturned. ....That is, differently from your previous lord.”

The instant Riku said those last words, Keity kicked the ground. The strength of her legs gorged into the ground and made a cloud of dust rise up.

“I won’t forgive your insult to Charlotte-sama!!”

Keity rushed at Riku like a bullet.

“What a pain.”

Clicking her tongue, Riku rotated her halberd at the palm of her hand. And then, she pointed the axe shaped point to Rook. In that manner, Rook’s collar was caught by the axe-shaped blade. (TL note: I guess she used the hook of the halberd?)

“Dwaah!?”( どわっ ! ? )

Rook’s body was many times more robust than Riku’s. Rook’s height was more than a

head higher than Riku, and the amount of muscles and weight were also close to the double of hers. (TL note: Is Riku a semi loli or something? It seems she is much smaller than I thought she was 0.0 Remember Rook is fourteen or something right now)

“Roppu, look after that luggage.”

Riku vigorously swung her halberd.

Rook was sent flying to the air and fell down at Roppu’s arms.

“Until I am done here, don’t let it run away.”

“Y-yes!”

Tying Rook with a rope, Roppu hurriedly retreated to the rear.

Rook didn’t resist. Maybe because of Keity’s beating, it became hard for him to move, or perhaps, everything that was suddenly happening now still didn’t get to his head.

Most likely, it was both.

Grabbing Rook, Roppu ran into the crowd of people and vanished from Riku and Keity’s view.

“Are you protecting that spiritualist? Even though you’ve denounced Charlotte-sama at that time!!”

Keity roared.

With bloodshot eyes, she was pulling out her hair, with it falling everywhere. No matter from what angle one was look at Keity, she had lost her sanity. Lightly doing a swing with her halberd, Riku sighed.

“I am capturing it for the sake of extracting information. Differently from that promiscuous girl, Keity Fostar.”



“This mouth of yours that is talking bad about Charlotte-sama... I will smash it up!!”

Moving her hand inside her clothes, she took out a sword.

The sword was of a size that was convenient to carry around, but despite that, it seemed very heavy. Just by touching it, it was possible to feel a dangerous sensation that made one imagine it could very well bring down an arm.(TL note: ;-; I hate words that don't really have english translations in the meaning they are being used. Do anyone have better ways to translate ->武骨<- and ->重厚感<-)

“Die!!”

Keity attacked. Her speed was many times more than before. With her speed, it became difficult to confirm her position by sight. While Riku was preparing her stance, an horizontal attack came at Riku faster than she could think about it.

The whirlwind made her red hair rise up.

Indeed, it had been just by a hairs breath. Riku had barely avoided the sword that had come at her in a blink of an eye. With her attack missing her target, Keity's went. Normally, this would be the time when Riku would get behind the opponent and attack him while he was distracted, but unfortunately, she couldn't follow Keity's speed. Before Riku could attack, Keity had already crashed at the group of humans.

“Kyah!!”

“Uwah, run away! Run away!!”

The bystanders were caught into a whirlpool of agony.

The sword that was overpowering to the point that seemed it would cut arms just by touching them and the lump of meat that had a speed to the point that it was difficult to follow with the eyes had hit the group of defenseless people. Crashing into the people that were wearing festive costumes, an amount of blood that could be to be paint flowed off.

At that time, the people of Derufoi had finally noticed. The fight that was happening in front of their eyes wasn't something like a cute [lover's quarrel], but a fight of a [demon and a spiritualist].

"Where is that brat? That guy was a spiritualist, right? Hey, why won't he protect us? It's his job, isn't it?"

"He is not here! He vanished together with that rabbit boy! He abandoned us!!"

"What!? A spiritualist had abandoned us humans!?"

Since it became a battle against a demon, as if it was the obvious thing to do, they sought for the help of the spiritualists.

Keity was clearly a ferocious demon, and on the other hand, the red haired was someone they wanted to avoid. Their only hope had been taken by Roppu and had already left the place.

The existence the people of Derufoi sought help from was nowhere to be seen.

In the end, something as trivial as the humans being troubled didn't matter to Riku and Keity. Without thinking about anything else, Keity only continued her murderous attacks without thinking about anything else and Riku would keep avoiding them at a hairs breath. And every time it happened, the people behind Riku would get torn to pieces and run over by Keity.

"Tch, annoying! Get out of my way, stupid humans!!"

Trampling over the accumulated corpses, Keity started swearing.

"What is it? Why won't you attack!? Didn't you want to punish me for breaking up your toy!?"

"..."

Riku had only been avoiding Keity's attacks and didn't attack back.

Keity's irritation was increasing. Rook Barusak hadn't attacked her back, and Riku Barusak wasn't fighting her seriously. Keity Foster was extremely angered, feeling she was being looked down upon.

"You keep moving around! I've misjudged you, Riku Barusak! I've thought you would have given me a better fight, but this is what you have!! Die at once and beg for forgiveness to Charlotte-sama in the other world!!"

"..."

Riku didn't answer anything.

Of course, she had no intention of dying and apologizing to Charlotte, and moreover, she didn't remember doing anything she had to apologize for. The reason why Charlotte had been judged was for the crimes she had done herself. Riku only had participation in helping disclosing them; there was nothing to apologize about. But that said, it didn't seem like Keity wasn't in a condition she would listen to Riku if she was to tell her that. While waiting for a gap in Keity's attacks, Riku continued to avoid them.

Riku was supposed to be able to block Keity's attacks, but unfortunately, she had only one arm now. If Riku had both of her arms, she would be able to muster more strength for fighting her directly, but with one arm, she didn't have the confidence of being able to fight perfectly.

Riku was waiting for the instant a gap would appear in Keity's attacks, aiming to reverse the situation when it happened.

But while Riku was thinking of that, something happened.

"Sob, daddy. My foot hurts."(TL note: How is the onomatopoeia for sobbing? -.-)

Someone's sobbing voice reached Riku's ears. Turning her eyes for only a moment, she saw a little girl crouched at the ground. Apparently, the girl had sprained her foot. While sobbing, she was grabbing the hem of the clothes of the man she had thought to be her father.

“Eei, how annoying! Let it go!”

The girl’s father kicked her away and vanished to the direction of the crowd of people.

It was the figure of a miserable and insignificant human. However, for some reason, even though Riku was supposed to not have even a fragment of interest about something like this, she ended up getting distracted by that.

“Don’t look away, Riku Barusak!!”

Still being controlled by her anger, Keity swung her sword.

Even though Keity only had swung down her sword, a roaring blow of the wind was created. Riku tried to jump to the right and avoid the attack, but right when she did that, she noticed something.

Riku noticed that the little girl that had been abandoned by her father was right in front of Keity’s attack path.

“Tch.”

Before she could notice, Riku was already jumping in front of that girl.

Stopping Keity’s sword with her halberd, Riku barely held it out. Keity’s attack was heavy and her left arm started to make a sound of creaking. Perhaps it would have been better for her to let it go, but if she was to do that, the girl behind her would end up hurt.

“A contest of strength? How long can you hold it out!?”

“...!”

Keity was showing a cruel smile. While clenching her teeth, Riku was desperately trying to withstand the attack. Sweat was flowing from her forehead and falling down from her cheek. Without being able to completely resist Keity’s strength, her feet started to sink into the ground.

In the end, was it really not possible with only one hand? When Riku thought about pulling back, it happened.

“Riku-dono!! I will assist you-de gozaru!!”

A voice came from above.

Keity looked at the sky, saying “What!?”. At that instant, her death was decided.

Riku forced Keity’s sword away and aimed her left foot at Keity’s stomach. Staggering by the unexpected attack, she gave one... two step backs.

“Thank you.”

Muttering her gratitude to the reinforcement, she kicked the ground. After slipping into Keity’s flank, Riku swung her halberd. Keity had ended up letting Riku get too close and couldn’t avoid the attack Riku had done with all her might.(TL note: Can’t find it anywhere->懐に潜り込む<- wasted freaking 20 mins on a single word  
~~~~~ Just going to put flank here ‘ 3’)

In a flash, Keity Foster’s head was sent flying and soared high up in the sky. She was showing an expression that didn’t know what had happened until her last moments. While looking at the severed head lying at the ground, Riku spoke her parting words.

“Goodbye, Keity Foster.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 84**

# 84.THE TIME FOR THE JUDGEMENT AND THE PREMONITION OF A STORM

“Now then, Asty. Do you have anything to say?”

Riku was silently looking at Asty.

It hadn't been that difficult for them to sneak away from Derufoi.

With the initial confusion of the festival and the turmoil that Keity caused, the town had fallen into uproar as if someone had thrown a nest of bees there. Sneaking away from the town, Riku and the others continued their escape with the horses they had hidden deep inside the foresta. The places horses were able to go through were limited, but for the Demon Lord army, or rather, for the demons that had kept been hunted down for centuries, the inner parts of forests that humans wouldn't go inside became their territory. Riding through paths normal people wouldn't know about, they were going deep inside the forest.

They've kept riding their horses for one whole day.

Finally arriving at a safe place, Riku started to question Asty Gortoberuk.

“I am very grateful that you've gone to give me support at that time. Because of that, an opening appeared at the macho woman defenses.”

Actually, if Asty hadn't come jumping to where Riku was, the battle would have lasted longer.

Because she had attracted Keity's attention, Riku was able to have an attack go through. There was no mistake that blow was something that decided the match. That's why it had been very helpful that Asty had gone to help Riku.

“Roppu had his hands occupied holding that stupid toy, so I really appreciate you came.”

“W-well, it makes me embarrassed-de gozaru.”

Laughing “Ehehe”, Asty’s cheeks became blushed. Feeling shy, Asty was briskly rubbing her head. However, her face was still somewhat stiff. Asty had noticed this wasn’t the main topic of their talk long ago. Because of that, Riku decided to go straight to the point.

“But you know, this and that are different issues. Now, I am really wondering why you were at Derufoi.”

With Riku speaking straight to the point, Asty’s face instantly became pale. Her expression told she had been asked the question she feared of being asked. Most likely, she had done something she couldn’t report to her superior, Riku.

“Now then, what were you doing? There is no way you were playing around, right?”

Asty was using plain clothes.

As to be expected, it wasn’t her military uniform, but it wasn’t expensive clothes the daughter of the prestigious family Gortoberuk would be wearing either. No matter how, it wasn’t possible to look at them as festive clothes that would suggest she had gone to Derufoi to play. It was a completely plain and easy to get mixed into the surroundings.

“Were you doing some kind of espionage? No, I don’t think you would be able to do some refined acting like that.”(TL note: The words used are so vague -->密偵の真似事<-密偵 = emissary or spy and真似事=Act, pretend, mimic, deceive...)

“Gnh... I can’t deny that-de gozaru” (ぐぬ)

“Right.”

Her clothes were something a spy would be using, but unfortunately, that was all there was to it. Riku couldn’t think of a reason for Asty to do such things, and to begin with, Riku didn’t think Asty was capable of doing this shady work. She was a very honest person and everything she would think about would show on her face. The action of constantly hiding your thoughts was unsuited to her character.



In that case, why did she go to Derufoi? While Riku was thinking about it, she heard a complaining voice from behind her back.

“Mmm, mmmmmm!!”

Correction: it was a groan.

As if he was complaining about something, Rook Barusak was energetically moving around. It could be said the reason for that was because he had both his hands and feet tied by rope and also had a gag at his mouth. Riku couldn't understand the words that could only become groaning which Rook was shouting at all.

“Sorry, I don't know monkey language.”

“Mmmm! Mmm! Mmmmmmm!!”

“Now then, Asty.”

Ignoring the groans, Riku decided to continue with the conversation.

Either way, there was no mistake Rook was saying [I won't forgive Riku-ane for ] or something like that. As far as Riku was concerned, Rook Barusak was a womanizer. Moreover, he had only beautiful women serving him.

Whether it was Selestinna or Rebecca or the maid Mary, every single one of them excelled at the department of beauty. Asty's was more beautiful than Riku. This should be enough for her to become a target of Rook's clutches.

“Uhm... I intended to capture Keity by mysel-de gozaru.”

Asty said in a muttering voice.

Apologetically shrinking away, she started to explain.

“I was intending on avoiding to trouble Riku-dono and investigate Keity’s trail myself-de gozaru. And then, after confirming she had ran away to Derufoi... I...”

Riku remembered hearing that Asty and Keity used to be good rivals.

It was the truth that Riku had been busy on these last days. If she had heard about Keity’s prison breaking, she would have probably left the command of her current mission to Vrusto and would have gone after Keity in order to execute her.

...Ultimately, she ended up executing Keity... But even so, in Asty’s perspective, she didn’t want to kill her friend. And so, it wouldn’t weird for her to think of secretly capturing her and sending her back to prison.

“I see. Is it all?”

“Yes...-de gozaru.”

For an instant, Asty turned her eyes to another place. ...It was to the direction of the toy that was lying near Riku’s feet.

“Do you have any relation to this thing being at that place?”

“I have no such thing-de gozaru!!”

Asty’s voice had betrayed her.

It was possible to hear that her voice had trembled slightly. Asty whole body was trembling because of Riku’s question. This was just as if she was confessing she had something to do with Rook.

“I see, I understand. Wait there for a moment.”

Leaving Roppu as the lookout, Riku left the place.

At the place at the other side of the bushes from the place Asty and Riku were, Asty's subordinates were taking care of the horses. After confirming the number of horses and the number of soldiers hadn't changed, she gathered all of them.

"I have one thing I want to ask. What do you think of what just happened now?"

"What we think?"

With Riku asking the soldiers with a lowered voice, they started to look at the faces of one another.

"The relationship with Asty Gortoberuk and Rook Barusak. You've heard the conversation yourselves, so what do you think about it?"

After Riku explained, the expression of the soldiers all become clouded.

"Could we frankly express our opinions?"

"I don't mind."

With Riku encouraging Asty's subordinates, they started to talk.

"Those were actions that had major general Riku in mind."

"I had told her using Rook Barusak as a bait for Keity Foster was dangerous, but it was still for the sake of not having major general Riku disturbed!!"

"That's why, please, don't punish Asty-sama!!"

Riku silently listened to the soldiers words.

What Riku had heard from Asty's mouth was the talk about her capturing Keity and the denial of she having any relation to Rook Barusak being at Derufoi. However, it seems that she actually had some connection. Maybe that was about what the subordinates had said, but perhaps they had actually joined forces behind Riku's back.

She didn't know the details. However, this was enough.

“Major general!”

“I understand. Thank you. Please, rest well.”

Turning her back to them, she went back to where Asty was.

When Riku got close, Roppu ran to her. And then, he whispered in low voice.

“Uhm, if we don't depart soon, won't Vrusto-san start to worry?”

“Alright. I will just finish handling some things.”

Riku took her halberd and lightly did a swing with it. Asty's and Rook's face twisted in surprise. This was understandable since they had seen Riku kill many people with that halberd. It was certain they already knew what would happen if she was to swing the halberd in front of them now that they were defenseless.

“It's alright, my toy. I won't kill you yet.”

Riku wasn't going to kill Rook here.

She still needed him to groan more, and needed to set a better stage for her to torture him. She would confine him, torture him, reprimand him, dismember him, and when he started to scream for help, she was going to throw him from a cliff. This wasn't something that was going to happen right now.

“Asty, the crime for acting by yourself without telling me anything is heavy.”

“...I understand-de gozaru.”

Asty's face was pale. However, her expression made it feel as if she had set her resolve. Squeezing out her voice, Asty started to speak.

“This had been defiance of orders -de gozaru. If I am to be executed by Riku-dono, it would be acceptable-de gozaru yo.”

As if she was telling Riku to do it in a clean strike, Asty shut her eyes. Rook, who was at the side, started making a fuss. His eyes that were tinted in fear looked as if they were screaming for Riku to stop.

Riku gave a long sigh.

“I won’t kill you.”

“....Eh?”

Asty became wide-mouthed. Rook suddenly stopped moving.

“I also acted by myself. I can’t reproach you for that. ...Of course I will still have you receive a penalty for that.”

There was a punishment for every crime.

Whichever kind of crime it might be, this fact didn’t change. While having the point of her halberd pressed close to Asty’s nose, Riku quietly declared her punishment.

“You will be dismissed from the Demon Lord army’s subjugation forces and be at house arrest at Myuuz castle.”

She wouldn’t be able to go to war. For the people at the military, whose purpose in life was to raise their position, this was a considerably humiliating punishment.

“This is the punishment I will give you.”

However, Asty’s face was refreshed.

“...Understood-de gozaru, Riku-dono.”

Still tied up, Rook looked at Riku and Asty in a weird way.

—

Happening at the same time in one of the rooms of the Demon Lord castle, there was a shadow looking at a man that had been sleeping forever.

“How boring... Really.”

Flapping his black wings, the shadow muttered in an annoyed manner.

“If you are collapsed, I won’t be able to eat that girl’s soul.”

The shadow lightly put his hand at the man’s chest.

The shadow... the shinigami was irritated that what happened had deviated from his initial plan. The way the man had lost his consciousness was getting in the way of his plan of stealing the souls of Riku Barusak and Rook Barusak. The last stages of the plan he had been building up at great pains during these ten years had become bubbles in the water.

“Right now, I will be about to go offer a contract to that girl. 断られるのがオチなんだよね. So you are really lucky.”(TL note:I have zero percent idea of what this means .-.)

At the hand of the shinigami, a pale light started to gather.

The light slowly enveloped the man’s body.

“I am capable of getting you out of this vegetative state after all.”

The shinigami grinned. And then, he started to laugh loudly as if he was having a lot of fun.

The shinigami couldn't help but laugh.

He couldn't help after imagining the results the man's resurrection would bring to the future.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 85**



## 85.A CERTAIN CLOUDY DAY

At that day, the sky was densely covered by snow.

The suffocating gray snow that would make one feel depressed just by looking to the sky.

“Really, even though it is such a happy day.”

Riku muttered in a bored manner.

Differently from the weather, Riku was immersed in a feeling of comfort unusual to her.<sup>a</sup>(TL note: I have no idea what this means -.心なしか、足取りがスキップを刻んでいる)

“Haa... Since early in the morning, ojou-chan have been looking so full of energy.”

From behind, Riku heard Vrusto’s voice mixed up with yawns.

“Since we finally came back to the demon capital, at least let me have some slack in the first day. After all, we will be launching an attack at where the seal is after some days.”

Riku didn’t need to look for the location of the seal.

Riku had sent scouts at the location on the map Shibira had told her.

It was a scout squad consisted of the best soldiers from different squads. What they had seen there was a rigid defensive formation that couldn’t be compared to the other places.

According to their report, from what they could see, there were more than a hundred spiritualists. Each of them were wary to the point of it being abnormal. It seems they got discovered only by approaching a few steps to the place.

Until now, this was the most rigorously protected place.

Even in case that wasn't the location of the seal, it would still be possible to cause great damage to the spiritualists.

"That's right. And so, shouldn't you give me a day off?"

"Tomorrow. Only tomorrow."

Putting his arms behind his head, in frustration, Vrusto spoke.

"It should be fine if you gave me at least two days, right? These days, I've been working all the time you see."

"Oh, but you can have your rest when you finish your task though?"

Riku wasn't a devil. If Vrusto would finish his work early, he would be able to have his afternoon free, having more than enough rest.

After being told that, Vrusto gave a long sigh.

"...In the worst case, this job is going to take until tomorrow at morning, you know?"

"Is that so?"

"Yes, that is so! I am going to say so. You are definitely going to take your time before killing the little spiritualist young master, right!!"

When Vrusto had spoken of a very obvious thing, Riku was finally able to realize what he was talking about.

Their job today was to torture the captured Rook Barusak... Basically, it was a interrogation for the sake of acquiring information from him.

“Well... That’s right, I won’t let him die on the spot. You know, we need to take as much information as possible from him after all.”

Normally, it would be an interrogator that would be interrogating him, but today, Riku butted in and asked for the unreasonable. Of course, the interrogator would be looking at them from behind. However, it essentially had become he wouldn’t be able to intervene. If by any chance he was to interrupt the interrogation, it would be only at the time Riku overextended herself at it.

“Ojou-chan is going to be torturing him bit by bit, aren’t you?”

“Isn’t it obvious? I will be having him suffer while moderating it little by little.”

“...As expected, it looks like this will take a long time.”

Vrusto lamented about his day off.

From Riku’s perspective, it was enough that he had received one day of day off. Riku wouldn’t take even for one day. From tomorrow on, she needed to do the preparations for the dispatching of the army, conclude the training of the soldiers, confirm the approval of their attack and participate in the strategy meeting.

In a certain way, today’s [job] of interrogating Rook Barusak was Riku’s day off.

“But doesn’t today’s job make you look forward to it? Just by thinking about it, I am feeling thrilled.”

Riku adjusted the halberd at her back.

For today’s sake, she had the axe blade reforged at a familiar smith. She had it polished to the point her face would be reflected onto it. While grinning at the brand new axe, she fantasized today’s interrogation.

“What should I cut off first from Rook? Should it be his ears that can hear only what is convenient to him? Or should it be his shameless lower half of his body?”

“...Ojou-chan, go easy. Let's stop this idea of cutting him in half. The little young master would die.”

Vrusto looked at Riku with a very pale expression.

While Riku was wondering if she really had bothered Vrusto to that point, a figure rushed in from the turn of the corridor.

“M-major general Riku! Second lieutenant Vrusto!”

The one who had suddenly appeared was Roppu.

It seemed he had come in very much hurry. Normally, the buttons of his shirt would be all buttoned up, but today, he came with his shirt open-necked.

“Ge-ge-general Leivein has woken up!!”

“Is that for real!?”

Vrusto's surprised voice could be heard far in the distance.

Because of how surprised Riku was, she became speechless. Being paralyzed by the shock, she looked at Vrusto perplexed.

“Roppu... Is that.. true?”

“Yes, it is! According to what the doctor had said, it seems he can return to his duties right away! He is already heading to the office.”

“Captain Leivein is returning?”

Leivein Adlar recovered his consciousness. In addition, it seems he can immediately go back to the frontlines.

Such a splendid day. Unusual to her, Riku's heart was filled by a bright feeling. It was as if it had become overflowed with it. Right now, her whole body was filled by a happiness that made her want to dance around. Because of how happy she was, her eyes started to become teary.

“No, but, isn't it weird? It's impossible for him to have such a sudden recover...”

“Roppu, tell them I will be postponing the interrogation by one hour. Tell them right now I am thinking about our next strategy.”

Riku had the feeling Vrusto had muttered something, but without minding it, she changed her destination. Slightly lowering his head in acknowledgement, Roppu immediately left. While fixing her collar, she headed straight to Leivein's office. Her pace was somewhat becoming faster.

“Ojou-chan, isn't it weird?”

Vrusto told Riku of his suspicions in a low voice.

“Weird?”

With Riku asking him back, Vrusto firmly nodded.

“Captain Leivein shouldn't have been in an state he could have recovered from it in a short time like this. Moreover, there is no way a demon that had been asleep for so long be able to return to duty in just one or two days. It's not that I am speaking bad of captain Leivein, but this...”

“Are you saying it is a trap?”

Stopping her feet, Riku glared at Vrusto.

“In case it is a trap, why would they be doing that? Now is the time for the Demon Lord army to be united and resurrect the Demon Lord, right? This is the time to move. Even baby demons would know this much.”

There was no way the anti Riku faction was preparing a trap.

To begin with, there was no way they could fight off this battle without Riku after all...

“This is a miracle.”

Riku was aware those words didn't suit her.

However, she couldn't think of any other words that could describe this.

“Ojou-chan.”

“Captain Leivein has woken up. Just by this, I am already satisfied. I have nothing to fear anymore.”

The Dragon Demon Division lead by Leivein.

Right now that Piguro wasn't here, Riku was the only number two there. Leivein had demons other than Piguro that were his assistants, but when thinking about their position and their strength, there was nobody that had the talent worthy to stand next to him other than Riku.

Before she could notice, Riku's mouth had already curved into a happy grin.

Leivein had recovered his consciousness. With that, the dream she had been dreaming of for these ten years had finally become true.

“I will become captain's right-wing after all.”

“You were here, Riku Barusak.”

From behind her, Riku heard a familiar voice.

She didn't need to look to know who it was. Without saying anything, turning around, Riku kneeled.

“Yes, I am here.”

It was the voice she had always been wishing to hear once again.

Riku had thought they wouldn't meet each other again.... She had thought it was a dream that was impossible to become true. With her shoulders trembling, Riku looked up at the person standing there.

Spreading his black dragon wings, the young man looked at Riku.

To Riku, he was just like a beam of light that had gone through the thick snow.

There were many things she wanted to tell him.

She needed to explain him the current situation, and it was necessary for her to talk about the information she had got. She needed to talk about the current draft of their strategy, and it would also be fine for her to tell him she had captured Rook Barusak.

However, aside of all this, there were things Riku wanted to tell him.

Looking at the eyes that were like a clear blue sky, with her voice trembling, she happily spoke

“I've been waiting for you return... Captain Leivein.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 86**



## 86.DUTY AS A SOLDIER

Leivein wasn't any different from Riku's memory.

His black and beautiful wings didn't have any wounds and she could feel a strong will in his sky blue eyes. He wasn't sickly.

If there was something to say that was different from Riku's memories, it would be only how he was a bit skinny at his cheeks. But even so, for how he had been unconscious and without being able to eat anything during all this time, it could be said he was extremely healthy.

Riku was obstinately examining him and checking his condition, but there was no mistake he was already fit for returning back to the battlefield. Riku chest went down, giving a sigh in relief.

"During the time captain Leivein wasn't here, the Demon Lord army..."

"I've already heard about what has been happening."

Riku was going to explain the situation, but Leivein stopped her from doing so by interrupting her.

"I've heard everything from general Gortoberuk. I've heard about the dethronement, the execution and who had been leading the Demon Lord army since then. And also about how we are close to unsealing the Demon Lord."

With his arms crossed, Leivein spoke in a indifferent manner.

"I've learned of your loyalty very well."

“...Thank you very much!”

Riku couldn't say any other words except that.

Raising the sound of footsteps, Leivein approached her. Lightly lowering her head, Riku waited for Leivein to come closer.

Riku's heart was beating faster than usual. Leivein was definitely going to praise her. While Leivein was absent, Riku had purged the evil from the Demon Lord army, and moreover, she had successfully discovered where the Demon Lord was sealed at.

Leivein was definitely going to pat her head for her to have done work worthy of being his right-wing. By each step the distance between them closed in, her chest became inflated with expectation.

And then, when Leivein and Riku were right next to each other, it happened.

“You must have been very occupied. Go take a day off.”

Riku quickly raised her head.

She didn't understand what Leivein was trying to tell her. Looking for the meaning behind those words, Riku glanced at Leivein's face. Leivein wasn't even looking at Riku.

“...Until when would it be?”

“For one month.”

“Eh?”

Because of how surprised Riku was, she became paralyzed. Vrusto, who was behind Riku, must also have felt surprised. A stiff mood could be felt.(TL note: 固まった雰囲気を感じ Why is it feeling the mood with the “back”? what would a stiffen mood be 固まった雰囲気?)

“During that time, I prohibit you from going to the battlefield.”

“Pl-please, wait, captain Leivein! What do you mean by that!?”

Almost tripping down, Riku jumped in front of Leivein.

“We will be heading to the seal in three days! There is no way I can take a da for a mon...”

“Then, let me change my words.”

Cold words of refusal. The moment Riku heard those words, Riku became shocked. Riku wasn't being reflected at Leivein's blue eyes. He only kept looking ahead.

“You will be in house arrest for one month.”

“House arrest?”

Why? For what reason? Those words couldn't left her month.

Riku waveringly gave three steps back.

“Were they really bad things? I-I... I've purged the scourge of the Demon Lord army, and then...”

“It's because you called Charlotte-sama scourge.”

With an expression cold as ice, Leivein declared.

Riku wasn't able to understand Leivein's words. With rough breathing, Riku shouted, seeking an answer.

“What is wrong in calling that scourge a scourge? That promiscuous girl was definitely going to cause calamity to the Demon Lord army! No, because of that girl, captain became

on the verge of dying!!”

It was the right choice to kill Charlotte.

Charlotte had fallen in love with a spiritualist, had had her escorts annihilated and had put Leivein at the death's door. If she hadn't been executed at that time, she would definitely be a hinder to this next war. Just by thinking that Charlotte could be persuaded by Rook Barusak and betray them at the last minute, it made her angry.

“It was correct to have executed that pest! That is...”

“Do you think throwing your superior to the wolves the correct action to do as a soldier?”

Leivein questioned. Those words were sharp to the point of giving the illusion that a white blade was pointed next to her neck.

“It is the duty of the subordinates to stop their superiors when they are heading to the wrong path even at the risk of their life. If they are not able to do that, they will only suffer the same fate.”

Each word was heavy and pierced through her heart.

Saying only that, Leivein left the place. Leivein left the place in a fast pace, but his footsteps for some reason felt very heavy.

“Vrusto, you follow me. I have a job for you.”

“What have ojou-chan... what have general Riku Barusak done?”

“Don't concern job related things with people who are at their break.”

With an extremely troubled face, Vrusto looked at Riku and Leivein alternatively. He started to think about something, but as if shaking off something, he shook his head and followed after Leivein.

Riku weakly fell to the ground.

She couldn't shout them to wait.

She couldn't say it was a misunderstanding.

No matter what, she couldn't say he was in the wrong.

She could only look at those backs fading away at the distance as if Riku wasn't concerned with them.

“Really, nothing had changed.”

Before she could notice, she was muttering this at the empty corridor.

Hitting the palm of her hand at the cold floor, she closed her hand.

Leivein couldn't forgive Riku, who killed Charlotte.

No matter how much she was to explain the reason to him, no matter how many evidences she was to show him, he would definitely not accept them.

From Leivein's perspective, Riku, who had killed the leader of the Demon Lord army, was a traitor.

She had gone against the code of the soldier. Let alone she becoming his right-wing, perhaps Leivein had abandoned her as if she didn't have any worth in the military. Thinking about that, Riku's heart became cold.

“What am I supposed to do...”

In this pace, she was going to lose her place in the military.

Even though she had finally got a place that she belonged to. Even though she had arrived

at a place her strength was recognized. For her to end up parting with it...

“N-no...”

Riku's body was trembling. While holding down her own body, she desperately tried to stop trembling. However, on the contrary, the trembling of her body increasingly became more violent. With tears at the corners of her eyes showing up, her teeth started to chatter.

“I want to keep being here.”

She didn't know what she was supposed to do.

Riku could only live in the battlefield. In order to have her revenge against the Barusak and also to raise magnificent achievements at the battlefield, she would train with her halberd. But also, in order to fulfill her objective, which was even more important than her revenge... in order to become Leivein's right-wing, she had put great effort.

“I don't want to leave here.”

It was becoming like bubbles in water. If Riku couldn't go to the battlefield anymore, she would become only a simple human. She would become just some little girl that happens to be strong which was unneeded by anyone in the Demon Lord army. No. She would become the avoided ominous little girl of [eerie red hair].

Nobody would need a girl like that.

Whether it was a human, whether it was a spiritualist, or even a demon... Nobody would take notice of her.

“You seem troubled, ojou-san” (TL note: It is written “heroine” in those little letters above the ojou-san.)

Right at that moment, a charming voice came from above.

Raising her face, Riku saw there was a man in black standing there. A handsome young man with black wings. If Leivein's wings could be said to be of a dragon, this handsome

young man's ones were bird wings. They seemed to be softer than the wings of Karula from the messenger squad.

“...You are?”

Riku looked through her memories.

It was a man she didn't remember of. At least, as far as Riku was concerned, he wasn't affiliated to the military. Riku started to be vigilant. Standing up, Riku gave one step back as a precaution.

“I am a shinigami.”

The shinigami showed a faint smile.

Because of the suspicious-looking smile, Riku moved her hand to the halberd at her back. The handsome man that said to be a shinigami immediately raised his hands, but still showing a smile somewhat free of care.

With the face of a harmless salesman, the shinigami gave one step closer to Riku.

“Ah, please stop this. Even if I am a shinigami, I've come to grant you your wish.”

The shinigami licked his lips.

His red and long tongue somewhat looked like a snake hunting for its prey.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 87**



## 87.SACRIFICIAL LAMB

“This is like a prison.”

When Riku had opened the door of her room, the shinigami let out a whistle, making fun of her.

It was a room that only had a bed and a table; a very simple bedroom Riku was familiar with. The coldness of the wind blowing, the floor that would make noises when one stepped onto it. Such room was impossible to be seen as the bedroom of a major general.

“The room is very small, so where can I sit down?”

“I don’t know. Why don’t you sit down on the floor? If not, you can sit on the desk if you want.”

Riku flatly said.

Normally, she would use her bed as the chairs to be sat at, but as to be expected, she didn’t want a shinigami she had never seen or known of to sit there. If it was by her, Riku actually wouldn’t let the shinigami to enter in her room. However, there was no way they could be talking at the corridor, and since there wasn’t anywhere else they could go, there were no other options other than she bringing him there.

“Now then, what is this about you granting wishes?”

After closing the door, Riku sat at the window where chilly air was coming from.

“It is in the literal meaning of the words, ojou-san.”

The shinigami immediately showed a business like smile. Taking out a bundle of papers from his pocket, the shinigami handed it to Riku. With a indifferent expression, Riku opened the scroll and read the closely packed letters written on it.

“In exchange for a soul.... right. This seems suspicious.”

Riku threw the bundle of papers back to the shinigami. The shinigami panickingly caught the paper.

“Sorry for acting all suspicious. Ojou-san, I will really be granting your wish, you know?”

“If you don’t have any proofs, I can’t believe you.”

Whatever may it be, it wasn’t possible to believe in something if there weren’t evidences to support it.

This was something she knew as well as she knew of the pain she had gone through in all her battles until now. The result for going into battles that lacked reasons backing them up was only a series of bad incidents. There was no way she could so easily agree to the proposal.

“If you don’t have any, then I will be refusing your offer.”

“Well, well, if you want any evidence, then I say it is right in front of your eyes.”

The shinigami happily smiled. Riku frowned. Only Riku and the shinigami were inside the bedroom. The few furniture that was around were all things that were there before Riku had come to live there. Besides that, they were considerably worn out.

...No matter how she looked around, she couldn’t see the so incredible object the shinigami had done his work on.

“It seems you’ve forgot.”

The shinigami’s smile was becoming more and more deeply intricate. It somewhat felt very unpleasant. Riku slightly stepped back and firmly grasped her halberd.

“What do you mean?”

“Don’t worry so much about it. For now, have a look at this.”

The shinigami took out the bundle of papers. All the way to its tip, which was yellowed because of the oldness, to its part where it was brand-new, white and bright, the scroll accumulated to the length of a dictionary. Flipping through the pages, he showed Riku a certain page.

“This is... My name?”

On there, Riku’s name was written.

No, strictly speaking, it wouldn’t be it. Although it was written with angular letters that Riku didn’t know of, she could remember about them. The letters written there were ones Riku had never seen before, so she couldn’t read them at all. But despite that, Riku had the feeling those letters were her name.

“Just as you have guessed, this is your name. ...No, that’s wrong. This is the name the “another you”.”

“The another me?”

“I’ve done a contract with your another self. Well, since I collected my payment, you shouldn’t have had any memories of it.”

The shinigami giggled.

At that moment, Shibira’s words surfaced at Riku’s mind.

At that time Riku received medical care from Shibira, Riku had the feeling that Shibira had asked her to a talk with the another herself with a hint of seriousness in her expression, and she also heard that she had been [eaten].

At that time she didn’t pay mind to it, but now, this could possibly be what she was talking about.

“Is there someone else inside me?”

“Have you never thought it was weird?”

Approaching next to Riku, the shinigami started to talk in a voice that gave the feeling of viscosity.

“Why was a demon at a human town... And besides, why was that demon a high-ranked officer of the Demon Lord army?”

After being asked that by the shinigami, Riku started to think for a bit.

The port town of Perikka Riku had arrived at great pains after being thrown from the cliff was the center of commence. However, it was years later that the Demon Lord army started their moves to capture it, and if Riku’s memories were correct, there shouldn’t have been plans of doing that ten years ago.

In that case, why was Leivein and Piguro at that place?

Riku has never thought about that before, but no matter in what angle would she look at it, it was strange.

“This was your wish.”

“My wish?”

“In exchange for your soul, you were able to obtain a place to belong to.”

The shinigami started to walk around at the small bedroom.

“A place that your power would be recognized.”

Raising the sound of footsteps, the shinigami walked around the small table.

“A place that would acknowledge you, accept your strength and your red hair. And then, you would be able to take revenge on the Barusak.”

As if the shinigami was waving a conductor baton, he was waving his finger around as he spoke.

“See? I’ve granted your wish.”

“Granted? When?”

Riku let out a murderous voice that was of the extend it had even surprised her.

Indeed, she was able to obtain a place to belong to. However, this place was no more. It had been said to Riku that it was fine if she didn’t go to the next battle. Out of any battles until now, his battle was the one she wanted to be of use to Leivein the most.

“Your wish was to get a place to belong to right? A place where you can have your revenge against the Barusak. Your wish wasn’t to be of use to Leivein Adlar.”

“There is no...”

Riku ended up having to holding her tongue. She couldn’t finish saying “There is no way this was possible”.

Riku’s first wish was that she wanted to have a place she could belong to. A place that wouldn’t throw her away and that would accept her. However, it should have been only that. There definitely wasn’t any kind of conditions saying that Leivein Adlar had to accept her in the wish.

“You were able to get a position in the Demon Lord army. Your revenge against the Barusak is also doing well. Even if you can’t go to the next battle, it is impossible that your position would crumble down. Haven’t you already been recognized? Do you have anything you are unsatisfied with?”

“...”

“Yes, only getting a place to belong to is not enough. You are unsatisfied about how Leivein Adlar won’t make you into his right-wing.”

While thinking how greedy Riku was, the shinigami continued his words. And then, he started to go around the table to the other direction.

“Leivein Adlar won’t make Riku Barusak his right-wing. From the beginning, he didn’t intend on having you as a soldier when he had picked you up.”

“You are lying!”

Faster than her words, Riku’s halberd moved. The axe blade of the halberd twined around the shinigami’s neck. Stopping to walk, he looked at Riku with his eyes wide-open.

“He picked me up after seeing my power.”

“That was one of the reasons. However, the real reason for that is another one.”

The shinigami had a dubious glint on his eyes. It felt as if someone had splashed cold water on Riku’s back. The strength of the grip of her halberd somewhat increased.

“He picked you in order to have you as a sacrifice to resurrect the Demon Lord.”

“...I’ve heard that only the blood of the royalty is necessary as a sacrifice for that though?”

While strenuously working her memories out, Riku asked the shinigami.

It was necessary to sacrifice blood in order to resurrect the Demon Lord. That’s why Riku and the others abducted the royal princess. The reason for them to have ventured to the center of the enemy territory was solely for this reason.

“You see, for the sake of dispelling the seal, it is necessary to have the blood of the people that sealed him. That’s why it is necessary to have the blood of the royalty.”

“I know that.”

“Quite sharp. The one to seal the Demon Lord was the king, but it wasn’t only him that casted the spell.”

“...Could it be...”

Riku’s eyes became wide-open.

The only ones to have talent for demon banning arts were spiritualists. It was impossible for the king to use such demon banning technique by himself. In other words...

“The sacrifice is the blood of the royalty and of the “four spiritualist families”. And besides that, it needs to be the blood a direct descendant.”

“The four spiritualist families.”

It was the Bernaal house, the Bistolru house, the Buryuuser house and the Barusak house.

It has already become more than ten years that Riku had learned about this. The Bernaal house, Bistolru house and the Buryuuser house had adopted talented children from other families at some point in time, and after the head of their family became someone from their branch families, their direct bloodline became extinct.

From what Riku knew, out of the four spiritualist families, there was only one that kept direct descendants.

“The sacrifice is a direct descendant of the Barusak. What Leivein Adlar desired wasn’t you, but the blood of the Barusak.”

The words of the shinigami weighed onto Riku.

From its core, everything Riku believed in crumbled down to pieces. Riku’s teeth started to clatter.

“By having you nearby, it would be possible to immediately use you as the sacrifice. If he had disciplined you better, this would have been even more the case. Rather, you would

have wanted to happily become the sacrifice. However... You brought Rook Barusak.”

Rook Barusak had inherited more Barusak blood than Riku, and right now, he was tied up and couldn't fight back. Even after the Demon Lord was resurrected, Riku Barusak could still keep fighting as a soldier of the Demon Lord army. In a more objective perspective, it would mean that Riku Barusak still had usage value. That was why rather than using Riku Barusak for the sacrifice, it would be better to use Rook Barusak.

“But if that is the case, then it is strange.”

Narrowing her eyes, Riku intensely glared at the shinigami. And then, as if blowing away all of her fear, word by word, she bluntly refuted.

“In that case, this would mean that during these ten years... everybody from the Demon Lord army has been deceiving me.”

In Leivein's case, he would probably be able to fool Riku.

Similarly, there was no doubt Piguro would be able to deceive Riku too.

However, would Vrusto be able to do so? Asty and Rudogar Gortoberuk had a personality which made everything they would think about show on their faces. Riku couldn't imagine them being able to have things hidden from her.

Other than that, it would be Edgar Zerrik. He looked at Riku with eyes of grudge. At the time at Sherr island, he seemed happy that Riku was heading to a place she probably wouldn't be able to make it back from.

“I am not stupid to the point that I wouldn't suspect of anything if I really was being brought up for the sake of being sacrificed.”

“That's right. Almost everyone doesn't know about this.”

The shinigami declared without hesitation. Slowly moving away the halberd from his neck with his hand, he approached Riku.



“The ones that knew about the truth of you being a sacrifice among the Demon Lord army, or even the dragon race, would be only the already deceased Charlotte Demonz, and also Leivein Adlar. ”

Piguro was the one that ordered Riku to abduct the royal princess. However, the one to have given those orders for Piguro to say was Charlotte.

“You were lucky.”

Before Riku could notice, the shinigami came right in front of her nose.

“If Leivein continued in coma, you wouldn’t have been able to resurrect the Demon Lord and would have died at that place. While you are wasting time here, the spiritualists are preparing for their trap.”

The shinigami patted Riku’s shoulder as he loudly laughed.

If the shinigami’s words were correct, then Riku had been about to die. Just by sacrificing the princess wouldn’t be enough to resurrect the Demon Lord. Perhaps they would receive an attack from the spiritualists while they were distracted about the issue.

“Now then, living sacrifice.”

The black feathers filled Riku’s sight.

At that moment, Riku’s view became dyed in complete darkness. Whether she looked to the right, whether she looked to the left, or even if she looked anywhere else, everything was completely dark. At the darkness which one couldn’t see even an inch ahead, only the shinigami’s sweet and deep voice echoed.

“What could it be that you desire?”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 88**

# 88.THE BARUSAK'S DEAREST WISH

At the outskirts of the royal capital, at the Barusak residence.

The beautiful white as chalk mansion was so silent to the point of it being ominous.

At the corridors normally there would be a great number of servants, spiritualists, and other people affiliated to the household going through. However, there wasn't anyone. At the corners of the corridors that were so wide that even a carriage could go through, dust could clearly be seen. The windows were blurred, and the yard that was at the other side was in a even more deplorable state. The trees of the yard that used to be perfectly mended had its form destroyed and the dry leaves were piling up into a mountain.

The glory of the four spiritualist houses; the last family to have unmixed spiritualist blood; the household of Barusak.

The reason why all people vanished from the house had also been because of Rook Barusak's frequent mishaps.

Prodigy, genius, great talent... The boy that had accumulated many achievements with his talent since young age was now only a normal person. Rather, it wouldn't be exaggeration to say he was lower than just a normal person. After piling up failures onto failures, his prestige was finally all gone.

With the glory of the Barusak becoming hazy, there weren't many servants that would stay for long at the residence, which started to feel as if dark clouds were wafting around it. Deciding the family was in a decline, they would immediately give up working there and go seek to serve a more influential house.

However, there was one more reason for that... There was another reason why there weren't any people around.

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At the dining room.

A man and a woman were at the table, sitting in front of each other.

There were many colorful cuisines served on the table. A well-cooked bread that had a slightly grilled surface, a extravagantly made salad despite of it being winter, a soft beef that would melt only by giving it a bite, and also, a transparent-golden soup... Each of them were cuisine that were worth of being called first-grade.

The mood there wasn't one people would be able to enjoy the taste of the food. The expression the servants inside that heavy mood were showing made it look as if they were pleading to leave the room.

The only one that didn't show signs of fear was the woman, who calmly carried her food to her mouth... It was Riku Barusak.

She was skillfully moving the fork and the knife, but the movements were somewhat faltering. She was anxiously giving glances at the man in front of her who continued to eat his food, Raimon Barusak.

The only sounds at the room were the sounds of their knife and fork moving.

“Father.”

The one to break the silence was Raku Barusak.

A crack appeared at the choking mood.

“What's the matter, Raku?”

Raimon Barusak quietly spoke. Without stopping his hand moving the fork, he casually continued to eat. The person that was the cause of this heavy mood was showing a very

calm expression.

“...For how long are we to continue to be in this state?”

While looking downward, Raku asked Raimon his opinion. The face that was being reflected at her soup was one twisted in anxiety.

“Of course, until the time comes.”

Without looking at Raku, Raimon continued to eat his meal.

“Haven’t Raku also agreed to it?”

“That is... No, it is nothing.”

Raku was about to speak something, but immediately closed her mouth. Fearing the reaction from her father, this was something she definitely couldn’t speak of. Shutting her true feeling inside her heart, she grabbed a spoon. Rust started to stand out at the silver spoon. It seems the servants that would polish the tableware everyday weren’t there anymore.

“I have no objections to what father is doing. The dearest wish of the Barusak since the founding of this country... is finally going to be realized.”

Saying words of lie, Raku put the spoon in the soup. Her reflected face becomes distorted and it becomes impossible to be seen.

“Yes, if it is for the sake of this wish, I...”

Raku wasn’t able to continue her words.

Even if the following words were lies, she didn’t want to say them. Raimon didn’t overlook her hesitation. While still looking at the food, he shot an arrow of words at Raku.

“What kind of hesitation do you have for killing that defective product?”

Raimon's tone of voice was plain, as if he was talking about today's meal. It was a very nonchalant tone.

It wasn't possible to feel even a single fragment of fatherly love in those words.

"The Demon Lord army has definitely found out the location of the seal. From our investigations, it seems Shibira has betrayed us and leaked the location."

"...The whole Demon Lord army will be caught by the spiritualist surprise attack. We are supposed to let the Demon Lord go wild for some time after he is resurrected, right?"

"That's correct, Raku."

Raimon couldn't fully hide his joy.

His voice from before was quiet, but now, it was filled with happiness.

"After just being released, the Demon Lord should become uncontrolled by his rage."

The Demon Lord was going to see his army destroyed before his eyes.

Right after being unsealed, his hatred and resentment would escalate. However, after seeing the destroyed remains of the Demon Lord army, his anger would increase even more.

"The royal capital will fall to the Demon Lord."

It was easy to imagine the picture.

The royal capital sinking into a sea of flames.

The nobility that enjoyed an elegant lifestyle and the poor people that wandered around the alleys; all of them would sink in the sea of blood. Together with the royalty, they

would hug each other only to wait for the footsteps of the death to approach them. Raimon had already arranged those things with the other spiritualist houses. From head to head, the direct blood of the Barusak has been inherited. Hence, what the Barusak desired was the will of the other families.

The only ones that were at the royal palace were only spiritualists that didn't have talent.

Them suppressing the Demon Lord was a dream inside a dream. If they were to stand in his way, they would only be able to hold him out for one second.

“The royal capital will fall. And then, the royal family will be wiped out.”

“And that is what father is aiming for.”

No matter how much the household was in the decline, here was still the main residence of the Barusak.

They still had many powerful spiritualists stationed there, thus having a military power that wouldn't be lower to the other houses. This was the other reason why there was nobody here.

“At that timing, our Barusak army will move.”

It would be difficult to defeat the Demon Lord.

However, it was possible to seal him again.

Using the demon banning ceremony they prepared beforehand, they were going to seal the Demon Lord at the royal capital.

The only thing after this would be the management of the Shiidoru kingdom.

The royal family would have been destroyed by that point.

The only ones remaining that the populace could cling on would become the Barusak, who

would have sealed the Demon Lord. Without being able to defend themselves on their own, the royal family would become extinct. Besides that, the spiritualists would have produced actual achievements by protecting the people from the Demon Lord. What's more, this would have become the second time.

Even if other members of the royal family that had gone to other countries in a diplomatic mission or for other reasons were to return... there wouldn't be any place for them at the kingdom of Shiidoru anymore. If they persisted in trying to get a standing there, they wouldn't be able to escape from the hands of assassins.

“At this dawn, when the plan will have been completed... Is the kingdom of Shiidoru going to become of the Barusak, father?”

“That's right. My plan is already entering at its final stages.”

Raimon was showing a bold smile.

“This will compensate for the torment of our ancestors.”

Since the old ages, the spiritualists have always been oppressed.

The spiritualists didn't have anywhere to settle. Although they had the power to defeat demons, because their power was fearful, they would be avoided by people. People would look coldly at the spiritualists when saying thanks, and when any kind of problem happened, they would look at spiritualists with doubt. In documents, it is written that at times the situation went very badly, they would receive capital punishment without a chance for a trial.

“Indeed, this might be so.”

It had only been these last centuries that their treatment became better.

The head of the Barusak had won over the king of Shiidoru by sealing the Demon Lord.

The king of that time was a very splendid person, but his son was foolish. He didn't attend to the strategy meeting when the Demon Lord army showed signs there were going to move in, and only stayed at the innermost place of the castle trembling like a coward. For



the spiritualists, he was the perfect type of person to gain favor from.

The Barusak assassinated the splendid king and put the blame onto the Demon Lord. They killed all the capable people that started to suspect them, and only stupid people were left.

The Barusak, and also the other spiritualists who followed their plan felt like they could finally walk at the sunshine.

“If that defective product can die for this cause, then it would be a honor for him.”

“But, then...”

Those words automatically went out from Raku’s mouth. By the time she held her tongue, it was already too late. Raimon’s eyes were for the first time looking at Raku. Those eyes reflected the figure of the frightened Raku at them.

“Did you want to say something Raku? Say it one more time.”

That was an order.

The choice to not say it didn’t exist. If Raimon told her to [say] something, [there wasn’t any choice other than saying it]. There was no way someone like Raku could challenge her father. If she was to do that... Her father would consider her to be disloyal and her head would be separated from her body.

“In that case... wouldn’t it be better to use that corrupted red haired girl instead of Rook?”

While having cold sweat and being full of fear, she spoke of her true feelings in an indirect way.

“Why is that?”

“It is said that that deplorable red haired girl had joined the Demon Lord army. Wouldn’t it be better to use that girl as the sacrifice just before the demons are about to dispel the seal? Despite what he had done, Rook is still the heir of our family, so it wouldn’t be beneficial to kill him now.”

“In other words, Raku wants Rook to stay alive, right?”

“... Yes.”

Raku nodded.

Raku wanted Rook to live.

Her sole little brother was stupid to a fault. He was a womanizer, selfish and his head had a few problems. His appearance was first class, and the heart of the women would immediately fall to him, but he would fail when it counted.

However, he was a loveable fool, and he was Raku's beloved and troublesome little brother.

“Rook mustn't be killed.”

“No, I will make Rook the sacrifice. He is unnecessary to our house. Besides, we don't need a successor anymore...”

With a white napkin, Raimon wiped his mouth.

“Father? What would you mean by saying we don't need a successor anymore?”

“Ah, Raku doesn't need to worry about it. It is impossible for you to become the heir.”

Raimon elegantly stood up from his chair. Raku still had many questions, but in the end, the conversation had ended without her having the chance to ask them. Raku silently looked at Raimon imposing back as he left the room.

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“Really, such lovely sister and brother love.”

As Raimon walked through the corridor, he complained, spitting out those words.

Raimon believed in Raku. Rather, he believed in her competence. There weren't any parental feelings there. There were only two things that mattered for him; whether she would be of use to the Barusak or not.

"Well, it's fine. The plan is already entering in its last stages after all."

Raimon unlocked the door of the library.

Raising a creaking sound, he opened the door.

On the table, there was an unfinished book. Raimon sat down at the chair and soaked the pen with ink.

The title of the book was [Military story of the spiritualists]

They were books that were left by the previous heads of the Barusak family and were written as if it was a duty for them.

They were books written with the intend to leave their knowledge to the future generations. Like he would always do, Raimon was writing more things on the book. Mixing lies to the reality, he was decorating the history of the Barusak.

And then, when he was about to write about Rook, he suddenly remembered what Raku had told him.

"...Red haired girl, right."

His red haired daughter was something avoided by people.

It was something that needed to be erased from the history of the Barusak. However, he thought this could become somewhat of a lesson to the next generations. This would definitely become a lesson about the dangers of keeping red haired alive and the necessity

to deal with them.

Moving his pen, he wrote about the red haired Riku.

“A red haired girl has been born.”

While remembering about the time Riku was born, Raimon smoothly wrote the letters, lining them up.

“”There weren’t any signs of the awakening of demon banning power. Going in accordance to our customs, I will kill her only at her seventh birthday.

I threw my red haired daughter off a cliff. However, throwing her from that cliff was a very foolish thing to do. If only I had killed her personally at that time. If I had done that...””

By the time he was able to write up to that point, a presence pierced through Raimon, giving him a chill.

It was as if somebody had touched his back with cold hands; as if someone had pressed a sharp sword behind his neck.

“Who is it?”

Without turning back, Raimon asked.

He had locked the door. In order for someone to be able to enter the room, it was necessary to knock it before.

It was impossible for the intruder to have entered the room beforehand. No matter how much they were short handed in guards at the moment, there were still plenty strong people remaining here. At least, they would have noticed someone of Raku’s level coming here.

“Raku?”

Raimon thought back about the conversation they had at the dining room.

Raku wished for Rook to be saved. It wouldn't be weird for her to come here to kill her father for the sake of this wish.

However... This wasn't enough for Raimon to throw away other possibilities.

“Ara, how cruel. How could you mistake me for someone of the likes of Raku.”

It was a sweet voice that ringed nice to the ears.

On the contrary to that, the voice made Raimon get goosebumps on his back. As if to try blocking what was coming for him, Raimon drew his sword and turned back. Right at that moment, there was a halberd being thrust at his neck. The halberd had a speed that a normal sword wouldn't be able to stop it no matter what.

“Gh!”( 「 っ く ! 」 )

It was by a hair's breath.

Changing the form of his sword, Raimon was able to protect his neck in time. Because he used the sword wrapped around his neck like a neck guard, the halberd failed to take his life. The loud metallic sound echoed through the library.

“How unfortunate.”

The wielder of the halberd took distance from Raimon with light steps.

Her red hair stood out at the dimly dark room.

She was leisurely holding a halberd of the size of her height with only one hand... The name of that devil was...

“What have you come here for, Riku Barusak?”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 89**

# 89.THE DISCUSSION DECIDING TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD

At the Demon Lord castle.

It had been a few hours since the Demon Lord army have departed to the location of the seal.

With his arms inside the pocket of his coat, Vrusto Asuteroid was walking at a corridor. The only sounds in the empty corridor were the sounds of his steps. There weren't any people going through the corridors right now.

It was only obvious.

This was because most of the demons had gone out.

“Really, why do I have to do this.... Hm?”

Right at the time he turned to another corridor, he noticed there was somebody in front of the room he was headed to.

Roppu Nezaarand was standing there. He was standing in front of the door as if he was guarding the room. Vrusto slightly tilted his head in confusion.

“Ah, isn't it Roppu? Are you on guard duty?”

When Vrusto talked to him, Roppu averted his eyes away in hesitation.

“R-rather, why is first lieutenant Vrusto here in the castle?”



“Stupid, it’s obvious. I am here to protect ojou-chan.”

Vrusto looked at the door of the room.

That room was the one given to Riku Barusak for her house arrest stay.

She should be feeling down... Rather, it would have been good if her condition was something that could be expressed by something as cute as [feeling down]. Vrusto’s expected that she would soon escape from the room and plan on a way to catch up with the Demon Lord army.

“This is about that ojou-chan. I can already imagine her “yandere” emotions becoming worse and she starting to run amok.”

Vrusto let out a tired sigh. In his mind, Vrusto could clearly imagine how possible it was for Riku to be now entangled in thoughts such as: “I definitely won’t forgive captain who left me out of the battle” or “Nobody will kill Rook except for me”.

“And so, I came here to stay on guard so that she won’t escape. Alright? So you can go now.”

“I think major general Riku will definitely not go out. That’s why I think it is fine if I am guarding the door by myself.”

Vrusto used his hand to push Roppu away, but Roppu didn’t budge off the door. Vrusto slightly raised his eyebrow. Roppu was a very meek soldier. At least, Vrusto had never seen he go against his superiors. He would move in accord to his superior’s orders and would definitely accomplish his mission. This was one of his good points.

“Who told you to stay on guard here?”

Vrusto’s position was that of a captain. Compared to that, Roppu was only a major sergeant.

Whether it was in the military rank or in the time of service, Vrusto was far off better. Because of how Roppu was still opposing him, it would mean that the one that ordered him was at a even higher standing. However, Vrusto didn’t have any guessed about people

that fell under those conditions.

“Sorry. I was told I couldn’t tell anybody, so...”

“Couldn’t tell anybody, is it?”

Vrusto lightly scratched his cheek with his claw.

“Actually, I was also assigned to be on guard here. I was ordered directly by captain Leivein.”

“You’ve been ordered by general?”

“Yes. So leave it to me for watching over ojou-chan.”

When Vrusto said that, Roppu’s face became pale in an instant.

Vrusto narrowed his eyes. There was no doubt it was a demon that had a position lower than Leivein that had ordered Roppu to stay in guard there. If it wasn’t for that, he would definitely imposingly say something like “But even so, I cannot speak about it”. Instead of that, his attitude has changed. In other words, he had been ordered by a demon of status lower than general.

“That’s why I will ask you once again. Who was the one that told you to keep guard here?”

Vrusto gave one more step closer to Roppu.

Roppu’s face was increasingly becoming pale. After one more push, he should be able to make him surrender. However...

“Sorry, it is impossible.”

Shutting his pale lips tightly, Roppu refused to comply to Vrusto’s orders. His thin legs were trembling like those of a little fawn, but his resolve wasn’t shaken. Rather, there was

a strong light in his meek eyes. The instant Vrusto saw those pair of eyes, he was able to guess who Roppu received his orders from.

“Ha... Alright, I understand it now. I know who was the one that gave you those orders.”

Vrusto gave a long sigh.

And then, at the next instant, Vrusto's fist went straight to Roppu. The difference between their physiques was evident. It was an attack that if Roppu received directly, the only mystery that would be remaining was whether he would be able to stand up or not. However, Roppu took the attack head-on.

“Kuhah!”( 「つくはっ！」 )

The fist that was thrown with all of Vrusto's body weight hit at Roppu's chest.

Blood and air was pushed out from his mouth.

“The reason why you are so obstinate at keeping your mouth closed is because those were ojou-chan's orders, right? Now that's even more the reason. Can you let me pass?”

Vrusto brought his fist back.

Although he took easy on Roppu, his fist still hit a weak spot. To Roppu, who didn't have experience in true battles, this was a very severe attack. Actually, his body started to wobbling downwards.

“Sorry, Roppu. Really, that stupid girl. What is there inside her room for her to make him keep guard here!?”

It happened in an instant.

Vrusto's eyes became wide-open.

Roppu grabbed Vrusto's arm. The strength Roppu showed by trying to stop Vrusto with

his whole body weight made Vrusto's inner alarm ring. Roppu used the momentum of when Vrusto swung his arm to shake him off and jumped.

“Sorry, first lieutenant!!”

Roppu's right knee hit Vrusto's face.

Roppu would run through mountains and valleys, and sometimes, he would also run alongside horses through the battlefield. The strength of his legs that had been trained by being a messenger had been made into an attack that even reverberated through the bones. The attack that made Vrusto's the brain tremble and his sight become blurry.

“...k, stupid! When apologizing....”

However, Vrusto wasn't someone that would be put down with just that.

Holding the knee that hit him at his nose with his arms, he threw Roppu at the wall.

Roppu didn't expect there would be a counter attack so fast. Without being able to absorb the impact, he hit at the stone wall on his back.

“...you should do it after you already won!!”

Roppu fell down to the floor.

But even so, his fighting spirit didn't vanish from his eyes. Putting his hand at the ground as if he was going to tear it off, he kicked the floor using his prided leg strength. While bleeding from his lips, he approached Vrusto with a ghastly expression.

“That would be my line!!”

Just like that, Roppu slid a sweeping kick at Vrusto.

Vrusto dodged with light steps. However, that was in accord to what Roppu was planning. With his right fist, he threw in an uppercut.

“Stupid, that’s not enough!!”

With his fist having been blocked, Roppu’s chin ate Vrusto’s left elbow. That attack made Roppu fall to the floor once again. He was squatting in pain, but his fighting spirit was still burning. After giving Roppu one last glance, Vrusto broke the door open with a kick. Bursting through the door with a flashy sound, the dreary room that looked like a prison cell entered his sight.

It was a lonely bedroom that had only the minimum amount of furniture. Every time Vrusto would come to Riku’s room when he had business with her, he would be affected by the dreary feeling of emptiness of the room. (TL note: Before they said that this was a room that was given to Riku for her home arrest though... As far as I am concerned, Riku would live in rooms of that sort, so I guess this is why Vrusto is saying that. .-.)

The owner of this room was nowhere to be seen.

“Tch, she already ran away.”

After picking up one of the black feathers that was spread through the floor, Vrusto started to feel a bad feeling.

There was nobody on the bed. At this room that didn’t have even a wardrobe, there weren’t any spots she could hide at. All there was at this room that felt like nobody had been living in was the black feathers scattered around.

“But what is with those... Are those feathers?”

Of course, Riku didn’t have some kind of hobby about collecting feathers from birds. She was a girl who lacked any femininity that would declare in a loud voice her pastime was training.

In that case, what was the meaning behind those feathers he had never seen before.

There were many demons that grew black feathers inside the Demon Lord army. However, he didn’t have any memories about someone that had feather like that. Moreover, he couldn’t feel any smell from them. No matter how much he sniffed, the only smell wafting around this room was of Riku Barusak.

Because of how unnatural everything was, a feeling similar to having a cold blade pointed at his back ran through his body.

Something happened between Riku Barusak and the owner of those black feathers that was inside the room.

For what reason did she escape from this room?

“...I will leave the thinking for later! So... do you know where ojou-chan went to?”

While scratching his head, Vrusto turned his eyes to Roppu, and asked him because he had nothing to lose for trying.

With his body leaning at the stone wall, Roppu futilely moved his body. All he could do was to clench his teeth and angrily glare at Vrusto. After a few moments, finally...

“...I don't know.”

Roppu answered in a husky voice that was difficult to understand.

Probably, he knew Riku's destination, but wouldn't tell him. There were no doubts that if Vrusto was in Roppu's place, he wouldn't have leaked the location.

“...Haa. Well, I have an idea where she went though.”

Vrusto opened the window wide.

Because there weren't any vestiges that Riku had went out her room, she probably escaped from there. Putting his head out of the window, Vrusto looked down. It was a height of six floors. However, right bellow, there were trees thickly growing there. Because the leaves were dried up and there were many that had fallen down the trees, there was no mistake that it was possible to mitigate the impact of the fall if you skillfully landed.

Actually, by looking at it, there were a few places where the branches of the trees were

broken in an unnatural manner. This was probably where she had landed.

“She doesn’t have her horse right now, so is she going on foot? On other hand, it is still possible that she got a horse from somewhere... Well, either way, let’s follow after her for now.”

Fortunately, there were still vestiges of her smell.

There was no signs it was going to rain. If Vrusto hurried up, it would be possible to catch up to Riku by following her smell.

“Hey, Roppu. Wake up already. You need to keep guard here, don’t you?”

“...Eh?”

Roppu raised a somewhat surprised voice. Giving him a sidelong glance, Vrusto jumped onto the frame of the window. Wind was blowing from the window, and his mantle was gently fluttering.

“Stupid! Do you want to let them know that ojou-chan went against her orders and went missing? That is exactly the kind of thing the guys that oppose ojou-chan want to have so that they can use it as a reason to kick her down. Besides that... she left you with the job of looking out for her back after all.”

It had been ten years since Vrusto was entrusted with the task of taking care of educating Riku.

This job still wasn’t over; even now it continued. Even if one was to say he had already finished his task, he still had the responsibility of the mistakes of his disciple as an instructor. Because of that, all he could do now was to go smack her and bring her back.

“Then, I will be leaving here to you... ojou-chan’s right hand!”

With resolve in his heart, Vrusto jumped down the window.

---

Happening at this same time, at the Barusak residence near the royal capital, the curtains of the war had already been brought down.

The halberd whistled as it went towards Raimon's body, wanting to cut it in half. The sword in form of a whip parried it, reducing part of the force of the attack. And then, drawing an arc in the air, it was aimed at Riku's neck.

There weren't any signs of the words "mercy" and "taking easy" in that battle.

The girl Raimon Barusak was trying to kill was his real daughter... and also the daughter he had once thrown away. There was nothing but pure killing intent in his sword. Being aimed Riku Barusak defenseless neck, the sword bared its fangs.

"How naive, father."

However...

With a calm face, Riku parried the attack.

Without showing any signs of strain, Riku nimbly handled her halberd.

"The one that is naive is you, Riku."

However, Raimon also didn't lose out.

With an indifferent face, without moving one step from the place he stood at since the beginning, Raimon swung his whip.

Sending back Riku's fast approaching attacks, sometimes he would sidestep and turn it into a counter attack. If an amateur was to look at this battle, he would believe it was a rough battle where the offence and defense would change in instants, but the reality was that it was difficult to say both of them were really using all their power.



“What’s the matter, Riku? The accuracy in your attacks is falling down, you know? Could it be because this is because you lost one of your arms?”

“Isn’t it father the one getting a bit sluggish? Are you getting negligent just because you are about to crush the whole demon army in just a few moments from now?”

“...Now then, what could you be talking about?”

While showing a smile in their lips, they exchanged words in a casual manner.

Both knew well neither of them were serious yet. Raimon Barusak would adjust his strength to meet with the strength of Riku’s attacks, and Riku herself would ease a bit on her attacks so that she would be able to hear from Raimon [certain words].

“We already have gathered all the sacrifices for the resurrection of the Demon Lord. We have the blood from royalty and also the blood of the Barusak. This would mean the end to the Barusak... So is it really fine for you to so calmly be having your breakfast in a place like this?”

Riku had one question.

Even if the spiritualists had set a trap for the Demon Lord army at the location of the seal just like the shinigami had told her, the demons still had in their hands the necessary pieces to break the seal. He wasn’t supposed to be able to have the time to be calmly eating breakfast and writing things on his book.

Rather than that, it was necessary for them to make their move with all their forces in order to stop the demons along the way.

“I see. Riku... do you want to know the true meaning behind the seal?”

Raimon chuckled.

“Yes. I can’t keep being manipulated by the false information of other people any more than that.”

In Riku's entire life, she had always been manipulated.

At the time she was young... Because of false information, they received a surprise attack from the spiritualists of Bernaal.

Because Riku didn't get the information that Kurumi had betrayed them, she had stood on the line between life and death.

Because the demons were carried away by the information about the Demon Lord crown, which was some treasure nobody knew whether it existed or not, a whole division was barely annihilated.

This time too.

Because she didn't ask more about Leivein Adlar's true intentions, her dream of becoming his right-wing was over.

"Answer me, Raimon Barusak."

That's why Riku asked.

The first reason was so that she could take revenge.

"Is the Barusak blood really needed for breaking the seal?"

The second reason was to confirm the true intentions behind the shinigami's words.

Was it really necessary to have the blood of the Barusak to break the seal?

If that was really something needed, it wouldn't be weird if Raimon Barusak would have already moved to stop the resurrection of the Demon Lord a long time ago by now.

However, why weren't there any signs that he had done anything?

“That’s obvious, my defective object.”

Raimon narrowed his eyes like a snake and showed a bold smile.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 90**

# 90.THE PRIDE OF THE STRAY DOG

Barusak residence.

The speed of Raimon's attacks increased.

With a speed similar to lighting, his whip-shaped sword moved. Riku was narrowly deflecting the attacks with her halberd, but Raimon wouldn't give her any leeway. With the shape of the deflected sword being changed into another direction, its blade headed straight towards Riku's neck.

“Gh.”(——ツく)

Riku bent her body and somehow avoided a direct hit.

But even so, the tip of the sword grazed at her cheek. The place that was grazed was gradually becoming hotter. Riku faintly frowned her face, and then she jumped back. Although she took distance from Raimon, there was no mistake she was still inside his weapon's range. Without letting her guard down, Riku reworked her stance.

“I see. Seeing how you can be here at a time like this, I guess this means that you've successfully captured Rook.”

Raimon said in a carefree tone, seeming like he was saying something like “Today's weather is great”. Riku narrowed her eyes because of the bad feeling she felt from it.

“Oh, is it fine if father doesn't hurry up?”

If Riku's memories were correct, Raimon Barusak had more than sixty years of age. Since Riku's mother had died, there were no talks about Raimon marrying another woman, and she didn't hear any rumours about him keeping any concubines. Because of that, in case Rook was to die, only Raku Barusak would remain to take the succession of the household. However, it was hard to think that Raku, who had the temperament of a scientist, would be able to manage the household.

In other words, the direct bloodline of the Barusak would be over.

“Hurry up? Is there any reason for me to hurry up?”

“Is it fine for the direct lineage of the Barusak to become extinct? While you are spending your time fighting me, your precious heir might die.”

When Riku pointed that out, Raimon’s smile became even more striking.

“It will be fine if I have Raku’s children succeed. There are many that can take Rook’s place after all. Rather than that, is it fine for Riku to be here? Is it fine for you to be running amok at a place like this?”

Raimon calmly sat down on the table. He was so carefree to the point that it looked as if he wasn’t scared of Riku coming to attack him.

“Riku would have been the one made into the sacrifice if you hadn’t captured Rook after all, you know?”

Raimon quietly spoke the words of truth that Riku didn’t want to believe.

“Riku is just a dog that had been raised for the sake of becoming a sacrifice after all.”

“!”

Feeling Raimon’s words, Riku bit her lips.

His expression didn’t look like the one of someone that was telling lies. Besides that, it completely coincided with the information that the shinigami had told her.

In other words, it became clear that the reason why Leivein picked up Riku was none other than to have her used as [a sacrifice to break the seal].

Let aside her revenge, the other reason why Riku had come to the Barusak residence was because she refused to believe this fact. But even despite that....

“There is no way that man thinks of you as something important. He is an inhuman demon that would have easily got rid of you the moment he saw you didn’t have any value in being raised. That’s why Riku is just a stray dog right now.”

Crossing his legs, Raimon held his sword in an exaggerated manner.

“This stray dog may as well die a miserable death fitting of a stray dog.”

Once again, Raimon’s sword ran through the air.

It was an attack that was faster than before.

...Riku couldn’t dodge this.

So did her instincts tell her. No matter how much distance she takes, no matter how she bends her body, that attack was going to directly hit her heart. After all, the speed of that sword was at one that couldn’t be followed by the eyes. There was no way Riku, who at the end of the day was nothing more than just a human, could block this attack that was faster than lighting.

But even so, Riku deflected the attack in reflex. With its direction changed, the sword hit her at her shoulder.

“...Ah!”

An intense pain ran through her right shoulder.

Because of how painful it was, Riku almost dropped her halberd. However, she somehow kept it in his hands, and just like that, she defended the sword that was swept in her direction, desiring to pierce through her cranium.

“Just like you said, perhaps I might be a stray dog.”

Just like Raimon had said, Riku was a stray dog right now.

She was thrown away by her family, the Barusak, and she was also abandoned by Leivein, who was the support of her heart.

Perhaps Leivein had picked up just for his own gains.

Perhaps since the beginning, Riku had been picked up just for the sake of being used up afterwards.

The reality was miserable to the point of making her want to drop tears, and it was so frustrating to the point she wanted to scream; to the point she couldn't bear.

"But even so... he picked me up."

The pain on her right shoulder stole strength from her body and she felt her life force flowing away together with her blood. If she was to become even more exhausted, she wouldn't be able to evade Raimon's continuous attacks.

However, was it really fine for her to give up here? Riku asked that to herself.

Even if her sense of value of herself had been radically turning around again and again until she arrived at this room, this was still the "return match" Riku would imagine about even in her dreams. Was it really fine for her to lose against the perpetrator for her fate to become hell when the chance was right before her eyes?

"He gave to the me that was dying a way to live!"

Was it really fine to let someone that didn't know anything about Leivein to speak about him as he wished?

Was she being a stray dog really something that could be decided by others?

Was it really fine for her to be killed by that man and truly turn into a [defeated dog]? (TL



note: An expression is being used literally means defeated dog. ->負け犬<- It is used for losers. Since it would be a shame to not keep up with the “dog” usage, I put “defeated dog” even if it feels a bit weird.)

“Besides... I would rather die than lose to you!”

She put everything onto that suicide attack.

With all her strength, Riku kicked the floor. In one go, she jumped. It was difficult to read the movements of someone in midair. Not only Raimon, but Riku too knew of that well. Riku noticed the tip of Raimon’s sword being pointed to her direction.

“Even if I am a dog, I am not a stray dog.”

Raimon’s sword extended.

This time, she truly couldn’t dodge. Both of them reached the conclusion that the force made by Riku swinging her halberd with only one hand wouldn’t be enough to change the direction of the sword. It was obvious that this time Raimon would consider the way she would be deflecting the attack within his expectations.

That was why this time, it was an attack that would definitely hit her.

Raimon too should have thought that this would be the finishing blow.

But Riku showed a bold smile. And after that...

“I am the best guard dog of the Dragon Demon division!”

...at the next instant...Riku greatly mustered her strength and threw her halberd.

Her target was her biological father, Raimon Barusak, who without any changes in demeanor was still sitting on the table and showing a nonchalant expression. The halberd that was thrown with Riku’s super human strength increased in weight at the same time its falling speed became faster. With a force made space creak, the halberd nose dived in direction of the single man that sat on the table while dragging the surrounding air with it.

(TL note: I guess by saying dragging the air it would be that thingy the planes that fly at march speed do.)

As to be expected, even to Raimon, Riku throwing her halberd was outside of his expectations. Opening up his eyes with a slight surprise, he brought back his sword that had been extended to the air so that he could defend himself. In an instant, the sword turned into an steel shield that was made in order to protect its owner. Right after the moment the five-layered shield was formed, the halberd crashed into it.

“Wha!?”

Without any difficulties, the halberd pierced through two of the layers.

The third layer was starting to crack, and it was only a question of time until it would reach the fourth layer. The one the halberd was weighing at was the owner of the sword, who was holding its handle. In other words, the attack’s pressure reached even to Raimon’s body. The attack that had the strength was making his arm creak.

“Tch, it can’t be helped.”

Raimon went down the table and stood firm with his foot on the floor.

Maybe because now Raimon’s stance was stable, the steel shield had also become stronger. However, by that time, it had already broken through the third layer and it was about to break through the fourth layer.

All that remained was the fifth one... The last shield.

If that one was to be broken through, Raimon would be crushed by the halberd and die.

Raimon concentrated all his power onto the defenses. While twisting his face in a form he hadn’t ever done until now, he held the handle of the sword.

“Hmth!!”(——ふんっ！！)

The halberd was pushed back with Raimon’s blow that was done with his whole strength.

Perhaps he was able to do that because the halberd had already lost most of its force by the time the fourth layer had been broken.

“...It was a very surprising attack... But did you really think you could kill me with only this much?”

Raimon brought the shield back to its sword form. The halberd fell to the floor to no use.

That carelessness. He decided by himself that that had been Riku's last stand... This carelessness had set his destiny.

“Wha!?”

Riku flew right into the front of Raimon's eyes. It was now that surprise truly appeared in Raimon's eyes.

“With that, it is over.”

Riku expected he would be able to defend himself from the halberd from the beginning. To begin with, since the instance that Raimon had blocked Riku's first attack when she entered the room, she had already become aware that Raimon was able to change his sword into forms other than the whip.

That was why she betted everything onto the attack that would come after Raimon blocked the halberd.

“Fatherr!”

Riku got close range and started punching Raimon.

While her fists weren't as strong as her halberd, with her inborn super strength and the added force from the gravity, Riku's fists had a power that was many times that of the average.

“Guhah!”(っぐは！)

Riku hit Raimon at his stomach with all her power.

Blood flew from his mouth, and the grip on his sword weakened. Riku wouldn't give him the chance to counter-attack. Just like that, his body was being sunk by those punches. When Raimon nearly fell on his knees, Riku swept through both of his legs with her left leg.

“...Gh, doing such dirty tricks!?”

“Dirty tricks?”

Receiving Riku's sweep kick and having his stance broken, Raimon fell to the floor on his back.

However, Riku's pursuit didn't stop there.

“I was taught... that in war... only the obvious is bad!”

With the vigour increasing in the attacks, she bursted through Raimon's flank with her left elbow.

The girl of monstrous strength hit him with an elbow strike, and then without any mercy, she threw a kick at Raimon, who had dropped his sword, with her right leg.

Rather than the fist or the elbow, the leg had more strength.

“!!”

Raimon's body was sent flying.

Perhaps because there was no obstacle in the way, he kept on, going straight towards the window, and then....

“Wha-!?”

...he broke through the window.

The glass shards flew to the sky and Raimon's body fell in mid air.

That took only a few seconds.

No, it shouldn't have taken more than even one second.

However, to the point of it being unnatural, that scene felt very long... it felt like eternity.

Before one's notice, the sky was already colored with the sunset. Raimon's white hair was colored by the redness. With eyes opened in surprise, he looked at the girl that stood inside the room.

However, his lips were formed into a lonely smile.

“Father!”

The next instant after Riku unconsciously extended her hand, time started moving again.

The man vanished from Riku's sight. Riku hurriedly ran to the window and leaned forward at the window frame. The limbs of the old man who had fallen from six floors were twisted into impossible angles. A red flower had blossomed at the place his head used to be.

After looking at his changed form, Riku...

“Ah, Aha, AHAHAHAHAHA!! He died! He finally died! He got his punishment!! Even though I didn't die when I fell off, father died! He died in such a simple way, really!!”

Her mad laughter continued.

Forgetting he was at the enemy territory, at the Barusak residence, she continued to laugh.

“Serves you right! Ahahahahaha..... Ha, haha.”

After having continued to laugh for a while, she crumbled down, coming to lean onto the window frame. It felt as if a wide hole had opened inside her heart.

“...Huh?”

Riku felt a feeling of loss she had never felt before. It was different from the time she killed Mary or Selestina. It was a bitter feeling of emptiness; it was like sand falling from the palm of her hands.

“Now then, what are you doing next?”

At some point in time, the shinigami flew down next to her.

While having his arms crossed in a bored manner, he looked at Riku from above.

“If you don’t finish your business soon, people will be coming here, you know?”

“I... need to go after them.”

There was no way Riku could keep standing there.

Standing up, Riku went to pick up her halberd. And then, with unsteady steps, she walked for her escape.

Her destination was where Leivein and the Demon Lord army were headed to: [The location of the seal].

Leivein definitely doesn’t know about the trap the spiritualists laid there. She also needed to tell him that Raimon Barusak had died.

Other than that, while she didn't go after him immediately, she would still receive punishment for going against her orders and not obediently staying at her room.

If Roppu, who was staying on guard, was to make an excuse for himself, saying something like "Riku forced me to do this", he would be able to escape from the punishment, but Riku herself wouldn't.

In the end, she would be receiving the punishment.

Even if Leivein Adlar didn't care for Riku, she still wanted to be his strength even if by only a little.

She definitely would be able to be of use to him.

Right before Riku left the room, she turned her head back one last time.... to the office room that had lost its owner.

And then, in a small voice, she said her parting words.

"...Goodbye, father."

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 91**



# 91.GAME TIME

Meanwhile, the Demon Lord army was marching.

Although they were slowly moving, they were certainly heading towards the location of the seal. They would go through forests and valleys people wouldn't go to and march through the main road at night. Although it would take time, they decided to take a safe posture so that they wouldn't be detected by the spiritualists.

In the middle of the knights and footsoldiers the army was composed by, there was a single small carriage. The plain cloth covering the carriage fluttered with the wind, and at those times, a face would show up peeking from the iron bars. In the carriage, there was the figure of a young man pressing his face by the iron bars.

It was Rook Barusak.

“Ah-ah. In a certain way, this is just like the development in the game.”

Rook Barusak dropped his shoulders.

The metallic sound of the chains binding his wrists disturbingly reached his ears. His favorite two-handed sword and his bow and arrow were taken away, and even all the kinds of grenades he had were seized from him.

“They are giving me food and water, so I think I will be able to keep living until we reach the location of the seal, but.... After all, Charlotte-chan isn't here anymore...”

Not knowing what to do, Rook was at loss.

Being captured by the Demon Lord army and brought to the location of the seal was the route that appeared when you got in a love relationship with the maiden of the demons. With their prohibited love being exposed, the protagonist would be captured and transported together with the princess.

Working together with the princess, the protagonist would plan their escape. But during that time, Charlotte would stop their advance, claiming that using Rook for the revival of the Demon Lord was a trap planned by Raimon Barusak.

However, the maiden of the demons he would have gone out with wasn't there.

And besides, the princess that was locked in together with him wasn't in a state that she could be talked to.

The princess Catarinne had completely changed.

The face that was acclaimed as the number one in the kingdom was broken. There weren't any signs of its previous form left. Many of her teeth fell down and the sight of her grumbling meaningless words was pitiful.

"Uhm... Princess Catarinne-sama?"

Mustering courage, Rook tried to call for her once again... but the princess wouldn't even look to Rook's direction. While looking at the nothing, she kept muttering nonsense.

This couldn't be helped. To say the least, the princess in the game wouldn't get hurt to that point. To the princess that was carefully raised with a silver spoon in her mouth, this was a very psychological blow.

"Sorry, princess... This is my fault."

Rook started to feel very miserable. If he was able to notice Riku's disguise at that time, the situation wouldn't have grown worse to this point.

No matter how much he regretted over it, he fully understood he was too late. His cowardice tightened his heart. If he was willing to do something to apologize, he first needed to think of a plan so that her situation wouldn't become even worse... However, right now, Rook pretty much didn't have any plans remaining.

"...Should I take Charlotte-chan's place and tell Riku-ane about the truth? But it really

seems like she wouldn't believe me... No, to begin with, she wouldn't even hear my words."

Turning his back to the iron bars, he dejectedly bent down.

While hanging his head, he fell in thought as he looked at the floor.

It wasn't like he didn't have any plans for escaping from there. However, this wasn't a plan the main character used in the game, but one completely original to him. There was no assurance it would go well.

He didn't know if he would succeed.

He really couldn't get the courage to throw himself into such a risky gamble.

"Ah-ah, what am I supposed to do... Ah, but please don't worry! I will protect princess Catarinne!"

Despite knowing the end result, without having learned from his previous experiences, Rook called for Catarinne. As expected, Catarinne didn't look at Rook. Having the realization of her situation confirmed, Rook became a bit depressed.

The sound of the carriage was stronger than the sound of the marching of the demons.

It had been many hours the time Rook had been listening to it. The light that would get in from the gaps of the cloth covering the carriage were gradually becoming red. The day would soon end.

After how many days were they going to arrive at the location of the seal of the Demon Lord, [the Valley of Twilight]?

It happened right as Rook was wondering about it.

"Hey, have you been doing well?"

A voice he was familiar with came from above.

Hurriedly raising his face, Rook saw the shinigami. He was showing a proud face as he flapped his black wings.

“Wait, it’s bad if you appear at a place like this!”

Rook hastily pointed his finger to somewhere at the other side of the cloth covering the carriage.

At all times and even by now, there would probably be a demon that was keeping eyes on Rook so that him and the princess wouldn’t run away. It was obvious the situation would get chaotic if that demon found out about the shinigami.

However, the shinigami broke up in laughs at Rook’s anxiety.

“Ah, don’t worry. I am standing at a place they can’t see me. More importantly... what do you think about that girl there? I came here to ask you about that.”

With his finger that was similar to a dead branch, he pointed at the princess.

Even though someone suspicious just suddenly appeared, the princess didn’t show any reactions. Nobody reflected at her empty eyes anymore.

“...Because of me, her life is over. That’s why, until the end... I need to take responsibility.”

Even if the princess Catarinne was to not recover for her whole life, Rook would continue to stay beside her.

Even if his voice didn’t reach her, he would keep calling for her as much as he could.

He believed this was his atonement for her...

“Maybe it is impossible. As it is, she won’t be getting back to normal after all.”

“Don’t decide that by yourself. Maybe a miracle might happen!”

When the shinigami looked at Rook with a suspiciously happy expression, Rook took distance from the shinigami.

Rook had the feeling he saw figure of the shinigami and the figure of a salesman that would speak of beautiful words and try to take its contractor down to despair overlapping.

“You... It’s your plan to steal my soul, right?”

“How disgraceful of you to say “steal”. I am simply having the soul as the reward for granting your wishes.”

“Isn’t it the same?”

Rook stiffened slightly.

He came to realize the danger of the shinigami on how he appeared under this hopelessly unadvantageous position. The shinigami definitely came there to have him make a contract so he could break through his situation.

“Don’t you want to make a contract with me so that you can have the princess go back to how she used to be? After all, aren’t you responsible for her to have become like that?”

“That... is the case, but...”

It was just as the shinigami said.

Originally, the reason why the princess Catarinne became like that was him.

It was the fact that he was feeling responsible of it. In his true feelings, he wanted to jump into the shinigami’s proposal. In fact, he couldn’t imagine that Catarinne would revert back by him staying by her side. Unless a miracle or some magic happened, it was something impossible. That was why if there was the possibility for her to get back to

normal, he would gladly offer his soul.

But even so, he couldn't agree to that.

Gazing at the shinigami, Rook flatly declared.

“But... I have other people I need to take responsibility on.”

Strongly, he closed his eyes.

The image that appeared in the back of his mind was that of the one thing that made destiny turn chaotic; the figure of his sister Riku Barusak.

The fear of falling into the dark depths of the ocean was unfathomable; Rook didn't know of the pain of being abandoned by his whole family. Rook couldn't imagine how much pain Riku had to go through after that happened.

It was impossible for him to comprehend Riku's feelings. However, if he only had thrown away those self-centered thoughts such as “she isn't really strong in the game”, “Riku isn't cute, so it's fine even if she isn't in my harem” or “in either case, Riku-ane isn't useful in the game, so she isn't necessary anyway” at that time and extended his hand to her even if for a little... Perhaps she would have been able to meet a different future.

“The time for games is over. The one that changed Riku-ane's destiny was me. This is just like the one that killed Seles-chan, Rebecca, Kurumi and Mary being myself. I said it before, but I... While I don't think Riku-ane will forgive me, I need to make up to her. Until then, I can't give my soul to anyone else.”

Rook slowly opened his eyes.

As if he couldn't understand Rook's words, the shinigami tilted his head as if he had just saw something weird.

“Hmph... You brother and sister... I really can't understand you. Why won't either of the two of you just give me your souls. Everything would go so easily if only you would have your wishes.”

“Brother and sister? You mean me... and Riku-ane? Or are you talking about Raku-ane?”

With that question, the shinigami put his finger in front of his mouth.

“Who knows, I wonder who it is about. If you want to know, give me your soul.”

The shinigami mischievously laughed.

As Rook stared at the shinigami, he wondered about his intentions.

By chance did the shinigami say [You brother and sister]. This meant that the shinigami had either approached Riku or Raku and had been refused. However, why would he go all his way to go after one of his sisters to get a contract out of them?

After thinking for a bit, Rook reached in one conclusion.

“...Wait a second. Could it be...”

The reason why the shinigami came to Rook was to steal his soul.

If his memories were correct, the shinigami should have said that the reason why he was going after him was because [his soul looked delicious]. If his words were true, it meant that he wanted Rook to give him the soul of his previous life as a japanese. It wouldn't be weird to think that this would be the shinigami's favorite dish.

In other words, if his thought process was correct...

“So either Riku-ane or Raku-ane have two souls like me?”

“Which of them do you think it is?”

“...Riku-ane.”

As far as Rook was concerned, Raku was his sister, was a scientist, and also a capture target for his harem. Rook would be observing her actions and would proceed her route just like the game while he would learn about her character. Also, he would sometimes ask her to make something that he remembered from the memories of his previous life.

If Raku was also a reincarnator, he wouldn't have been able to get her heart to fall in love with him by using the game walkthrough.

Besides, except for the things Rook asked her to make for him, the items she created were similar to the ones she would make in the game. If she was a reincarnator, she would have also made things more leaned towards the things of the previous world.

In that case, by elimination, there was only one person.

“Was Riku-ane also japanese?”

“Who knows? I don't have interest in this kind of thing.”

The shinigami put on a hat.

Holding a cane he took from nowhere, he made a jovial smile.

“The game is still going after all.”

Those words stickly resounded.

As if the words had form, they wrapped around Rook's body. Rook was feeling a discomfort that felt as if silk wadding was tightening around his neck.

“There is no way. After all, Charlotte-chan isn't here anymore, the princess became broken and Riku-ane is commanding the army too.”

“Yes, you don't know, right. In that case, I will do a special service and tell you a few things.”



Moving his tongue close to Rook's ear, the shinigami said the truth with a feeble voice.

“Riku was discharged. The one leading those troops is Leivein Adlar!”

“...Eh?”

Rook's body shrunk in as if he had been splashed cold water.

In an instant, the part of the story of the game that was related to the words of the shinigami started to spread out in his mind.

“Leivein Adlar is leading the Demon Lord army? It isn't Riku-ane? Even though Charlotte-chan isn't here!?”

Wanting to deny it, Rook kept rattling on. However, with his bold smile, the shinigami wouldn't shook his head. As he was patting his cane in anticipation with his right hand, he looked at Rook with a malicious gaze.

“Rather, it is because Charlotte had died that it became like that. You should understand that, right? Understand what will be happening from now on.”

Rook couldn't respond to the shinigami.

No, he wasn't able to say the answer in words to the shinigami. While imagining about what was going to happen in the future, he was hit by a fear that was similar to the one of sitting with bare feet in a mountain of needles in hell.

Leivein Adlar was leading the Demon Lord army.

They were heading towards the [valley of twilight], the location of the seal.

It was the route that would happen after Charlotte was confined and Rook get brought to the land of the seal.

It was a ending that was at an insane level of difficulty and that would lead you to the bad

end if you were to choose even one wrong choice.

In his previous world, by challenging it more than ten times, the times Rook was able to get “game clear” were about two or three... The expected dangerous climax of the story was to the point it could be said that it would have been impossible for Rook to clear the game if he hadn't looked at the walkthrough site while he played.

Just like the description would tell... it was the bad end the world would be destroyed.

“The time period of the game didn't end. If you are so ambitious to the point of not wanting to give me your soul, then you might as well be part of the play until the very end... protagonist-san!”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 92**

# 92.ROOK'S DECISION, DREAD OF RED HAIR

“Uhm... I would like to go to the toilet, but...”

Moving his face close to the iron bars, Rook asked with words of plea.

...It was night time.

After moving away the cloth covering the carriage in an unsuspecting manner, it could be seen the sun was nowhere to be found.

In fact, the sky was covered by a thick and depressing snowfall, and not only the shine of the stars, but even moonlight couldn't reach the land. No matter how much he was to strain his eyes, only the darkness of the night that seemed to be covering the surroundings like a black veil could be seen outside the cage. The darkness was deeper than he would have imagined, and he couldn't spot anyone watching over him.

Could it be there was nobody keeping an eye on him?

Pressing his face onto the iron bars for as much as he could, Rook put out his moderately long nose outside the cage.... Right at that moment...

“You can't. If you want to take a piss, do that at the corner of your cage!”

Together with an angry yell, a punch flew onto him.

Because Rook moved his body back, he ended up fine. If his luck had been bad, there was no mistake his nose would have been broken. Rook was assaulted by a feeling similar to having a blow of cold wind passing by his back. However, there was no way he could falter because of that. Making a smile to his utmost capabilities, Rook mustered courage and talked to the guard.

“N-no... but you know, since the march has taken a stop for once... isn't it fine if it is for just a little?”

“You can't. Are you planning on running away?”

“No, no, no! Wait! You see, you wouldn't want to watch over a cage smelling like piss, right?”

He desperately requested.

With that, the demon guard showed a bit of an expression of thought. Even if there was shifts for watching over Rook, the guard still didn't want to move along a cage that was smelling bad.

“And besides, because the smell is really bad, wouldn't it make it easier for the humans to notice you?”

In fact, at the corner of the cage.... at the toilet, there was a smell that made it difficult to get close to.

Even if the guard was at the opposite side of the corner, there would still be times he would do slight movements because of wanting to cover his nose. Even if there was shift change, overwatching the cage was still a penance to the demons.

“...Wait a bit.”

The presence of the guard demon was becoming distant.

It had been only a few minutes. However, it felt as if a really long time had passed until the guard came back. In a loud noise, only the sound of the trembling chains reverberated.

Finally, the guard came back. Because it was dark, it was hard to see his expression.

“Hey, come with me.”

The guard opened the cage and immediately caught Rook.

Rook didn't put up resistance. Because of the handcuffs, he couldn't even send punches, and it was also difficult to get grapples. The guard put a brand-new rope around Rook's neck and took hold of it.

"Thank you."

"Doing this is my job."

Rook walked as he was being dragged by the guard. It has been many days since he left the cage. There were many torches at the distance in the surroundings of the cage. It was shining on various demons. As if the demons didn't want to meet eyes with Rook, there were only a few that were looking at his direction.

...It seem that the story about demons avoiding humans was true. Riku surely went through a lot because of that... While Rook was thinking about that, they arrived at a bush that was in the middle of the trees.

"Now, do what you need to already."

The guard hurried Rook.

It seems that because the guard was considerate about Rook being seen by the other demons at the surroundings, he took him to a bush. While feeling guilty about such demon, Rook slightly bent forward. And then...

"Sorry!"

A single attack using his unrestrained feet. Rook wanted to attack the demon with the smallest possible strength and hit at a weak spot that would break his balance... He kicked the demon at the side of his knee. No matter who, receiving an unexpected surprise attack would give a considerable amount of surprise and lead the person to show an opening. The same could be said about the guard. While letting out a gasp, the guard stumbled, although only slightly. Rook was waiting for that moment.

“Ei!”

Aiming for the middle of the guard’s head, Rook threw in a headbut.

Without the guard being able to avoid it, he fell backwards with blank eyes. At the quiet place where the bush was, the sound of his fall resounded.

“What is it!?”

The other demons immediately heard the noise.

Rook quickly drew the sword of the guard and infused demon banning power in it.

“Take this!!”

In an instant, a dazzling shine that would make one believe it became afternoon filled the surroundings.

Rook’s attribute was light. His plan was to blind the enemies by having the light attribute infused in his sword and have it shine as much as possible. As expected, the eyes of the demons that had become used to marching at night were made useless. Taking off the coat the guard was wearing, Rook ran deep into the forest.

“But even so, I should have bought at most only a few minutes with this much... So I need to save the princess quick!”

Rook cut the rope in his neck and also shattered his handcuffs. Now that he had both his hands free, the rest would be easy. Rook put on the coat he stole and wore in his head the secret weapon he had been hiding in the inner pocket of his clothes.

“Alright. With that, I should somehow...”

“What are you doing there?”

At the next moment, a sharp voice came from behind.

Because of that voice that felt like it pierced his heart, Rook felt like wanting to apologize, but he barely endured. As if killing his own fear, Rook clenched his fists and turned to the direction of the owner of that voice. The one standing there was one of the guards that were assigned to keep watch over him. In a situation like this, normally he would have been captured and brought back to the cage.

However, the instant the guard saw Rook, his complexion changed.

“Ah, you... no, general!?” (TL note: I couldn't think of a word to translate this -> 貴方様 <- so I just put general ^^)

The word “troubled” appeared in the demon's face. It seems that Rook was able to successfully deceive him. Rook mentally breathed out in relief.

“What you are doing there? That is my line.”

Rook spoke with the calm tone of voice he needed to use.

What Rook was wearing was a [red wig]. Rook disguised himself as his elder sister that was a member of the Demon Lord army, Riku.

Originally, their appearances were similar. Even their height wasn't that much different. If he was to dress up in a coat, people wouldn't notice the difference in their physique.

Whether fortunate or unfortunate, even the moon was hidden at that night. Maybe it was because the demons kept the torchlight to the minimum so that their march wouldn't stand out, but it was difficult to distinguish the details. Tonight was a good night to be disguising as Riku.

“I've been told to take the princess to another place due to a secret mission. Immediately go bring the princess and a horse.”

While imitating Riku's tone of voice, he carefully chose his words. Bit by bit his tone of voice became leisure, but perhaps this made up for the nonchalance characteristic of Riku instead. And then, the demon...



“Un-understood, major general. I will immediately bring that woman!”

Saying those words, the demon ran back into the direction of the cage. It was as if his butt had caught fire.

“...Haa. To think that a wig would be of use in a place like this.”

Rook let out a wry smile while he was walking towards the cage.

Originally, Rook planned to use this wig in order to infiltrate into the Demon Lord castle. It was definitely not something he planned on using for escaping, but it seemed it was well used. To use what he could without pettiness was the exact definition of that situation. In the same way it had been done to Rook, the princess and the horse were brought, being dragged by a rope.

“I have brought her, major general.”

“Good work. Immediately go back to searching for Rook. Besides that, since my task related to the princess is secret... the instant you open your mouth about that, I will be cutting your head off, so have that in mind.”

“Ye-yes!”

After giving a bow as if he was a spring, he left the place as if he was running away. While having the princess ride on the horse, Rook muttered “Riku-ane... She really has a very scary impression”. The demon from before was a big muscular man. In the demon society, the most essential was strength. By how that man that was big to the point Rook had to raise his face to look at him behaved so obediently only showed how Riku was strong.

Rook once again regretted making enemies with Riku.

“Now then, let’s go!”

Getting onto the horse himself, Rook rode deep into the forest. Sometimes he would turn

back and check whether there were any demons pursuing them.

He was heading to the royal capital; to the Barusak residence.

Perhaps it would be good for Rook to go straight to the [valley of twilight] in order to have the spiritualists protecting the place know about the danger incoming. However, this choice would lead to the bad end. The princess, who amounted to a nonexistent fighting power, would be taken as a hostage, and they would be killed without really having the chance to achieve anything.

The correct choice was to head to the Barusak residence. There he would be able to request for Barusak reinforcements, protect the princess, who would only become a burden at battle, and finally, he would also be able to stop the ambitions of Raimon Barusak.

“I can’t bring the princess to the location of the seal anyway with how she is now... So this can’t be the wrong choice.”

It was different from the escaping method of the game, but their escape was successful. After that, there wouldn’t be any problems as long as he acted while reflecting on the story of the game. While riding the horse, Rook was desperately assembling plans for what could happen hereafter.

“I need to ask Raku-ane to take care of the princess...and to request for reinforcements.... But, will Raku-ane really help me?”

A tinge of anxiety appeared in Rook’s mind.

Right now, Rook wasn’t the main character. The chances of Raku lending her strength to him, who had only caused prejudice to the Barusak, were low. However, all he could do was to bet on that small chance.

“Really, I beg you, please be faster!”

Rook strongly kicked the sides of the horse and had its speed increased.

Because the snow was hiding the stars, Rook didn’t know which direction the Barusak

residence was at. However, there was still a way to know it. Rook pointed the sword he obtained before to the sky.

“Eei, disperse the snow!!”

Light gathered at the point of the sword and mightily rose up to the sky. Just like the darkness, the snow was pierced through by the pillar of light. The dazzling flood of light drove away the massive clouds. A sky filled with stars showed up.

“Alright, it went well. ....Hmm, the star that is at the north.... is that one, so the Barusak residence should be this way.”

Rook moved the reins and had the horse go in the correct direction.

Because the sky became clear, the moonlight was shining onto the road. It also became easier to see and to spot where the road was going. If the results were to be this much, it would have been better if Rook had used this power a bit earlier. But right when Rook was about to conclude that thought to be correct...

“What are you doing there?”

Suddenly, a voice called for him.

When Rook turned to the voice as if like he threw his face into its direction, he saw military troops he had never seen before standing on the cliff. Rook stopped the horse for the moment and gazed at the troops. It was a squad composed of black armored soldiers.

“That red hair... Why are you here?”

Those soldiers went down the cliff and stood in front of Rook’s way. The instant Rook saw them, shock went through his heart. The one commanding those troops was a young demon with black dragon wings.

“Leivein Adlar!? Why are you!?”

Finally Rook started retreating. However, his retreat path had already been blocked. All

the sides had already been blocked by muscular demons.

“I saw a pillar of light.”

“Light... Ah!?”

Rook was covered in cold sweat.

He didn't consider that his position might get exposed because of the light. Rook clenched his teeth and regretted his lack of carefulness. However, even if he was to regret that, it would be to no use. He needed to think of a way to get through the demons.

“Now is my turn for the questioning. Why are you here?”

“I... No, I...” (TL note: In the first “I” Rook used ->僕<-, which is a male pronoun for I, and in the second “I”, he used ->私<-, which is a gender neutral pronoun used by most female in general.)

Rook desperately straightened his back.

Fortunately, he was still using the red wig. Besides that, by guessing from Leivein's behavior, it seemed that he still didn't notice Rook's disguise. If he was to keep acting like Riku, perhaps he might somehow be able to get through this situation.

“I received a secret mission. It was to bring this woman.”

Remembering the mood of her voice, the tone, her behavior, Rook desperately tried to pass himself as Riku.

He had been referred to as [major general] before. Leivein, who was a general, had a higher position. However, it was about that Riku that it was being talked about. Even if he was ranked higher, there shouldn't be any mistake that Riku would respond to him without fear.

“No matter how much general Leivein asks me, I can't hand her over. Move over already. I am in hurry.”

“Hou... So you are talking back on me.” (TL note: This is so embarrassing -.- Rook will make me want to jump head down from the window)

Leivein's mouth was twisted.

Leivein continued his words, saying “Despite being the dog I've been carefully training”. When he saw how Leivein reacted, Rook noticed his mistake. It seems that he made a mistake somewhere in his decisions. While holding the reins, he started to think how he was supposed to escape from there.

“You are Rook Barusak, right?”

“Tch, as if. I am Riku. Riku Barusak of the Demon Lord army.”

But even so, he continued to perform as Riku with all his heart.

Even if that demon in front of his eyes had found out about his identity, perhaps the other demons didn't. If he was able to fool them that he was Riku, doubt would be born in his hearts. The demons that would still hold doubts wouldn't come to attack him.

Wondering whether he really didn't have any opening to escape from, Rok looked around.

“Are you planning on running away? Your acting is too crude, you know?”

“It's not crude or anything...”

Rook firmly held onto the reins.

If he was able to jump over the demon soldiers, he would be able to easily escape. If he had the horse he was used to riding, perhaps this would be possible. However, there were many things he still didn't know about the strengths of the horse he was using. He didn't know whether this horse that had been specifically chosen for him would have this extend of jumping strength.

If he was to unsuccessfully jump through the soldiers, he would sink into the sea of demons. Let alone Rook, the defenseless princess would definitely die.

Now that Rook decided to protect her, even if he had to risk her death to end up as a lowly one, it was necessary that they avoided this crisis at all costs.

However, it wasn't even needed to be said. Because the choice of fighting wasn't there, it was necessary to escape. And so, with his life on the line, he would try to escape and protect her with his body.

Making his resolve, Rook kicked the sides of his horse with all his strength.

“I, am me!!”(TL note: ->私(は)、私だ——ッ！！<- It literally translates to “I am me!!”  
¬¬ I guess it is him saying that he really is Riku.... I have no idea how to translate it to english .-.)

The horse raised an exalted cry and kicked the ground. It jumped in one go with Rook and the princess riding on its back. The horse attempted to jump over the demon soldiers.

However, there was no way things would go that well.

Without the horse being able to get enough height, it gradually started to fall down. What filled Rook's sight was a sea of demons. Moreover, wielding sharp and pointed weapons, they tried to aim for them.

“As I thought, it's no good!?”

By measuring it with his sight, he saw the distance was of five meters. (TL note: Distance to get out of the encirclement? It doesn't specify ¬¬)

A hell of swords and spears was waiting for Rook and the princess.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 93**

# 93.THE SILVER FLASH

It was approaching.

The sea of demons was approaching.

Opening its mouth, the sea of madness waited for Rook and the princess to fall down into it. Once they were engulfed by it, it was clear to the eyes that not only Rook, but the princess, who couldn't defend herself, would die in an instant.

There was a great amount of sweat on Rook's forehead. Was this the end? Even though they were able to escape, would they get caught and immediately get the bad end? Was he going to become the cornerstone for the Demon Lord's revival whilst harboring regret and without being able to have atonement? Could he simply accept all this without doing anything? No! The thought of giving up and believing this was his limit by itself was wrong.

Rook drew his sword, and as if to cheer up his fearful heart, he shouted.

“As if I am going to dieee!!”

Light gathered at the sword.

The pale light shrouded into a swirl at the center of the sword and became enveloped in light that would dazzle the eyes. In this deep night even the moonlight was dim, as to be expected, even demons... Rather, it was with how demons had good eyesight at night that the strong and sudden light blinded their eyes

“Gh, too bright.”

Rook didn't let the fact that the sight of the demons became limited go by. By using this opening, perhaps he would be able to run away. Confirming his success, he raised the corners of his mouth. However, it didn't end easily like that.



While there were merits in what he did, there were demerits.

It wasn't only the demons that were surprised by the sudden light.

It had also shone onto the eyes of the horse Rook was riding on.

Of course, if it was the horse he was familiar to using, it wouldn't happen because he had trained it so that it wouldn't get surprised by this extent of illumination. However, the horse he was riding right now was one he borrowed from the demons. Having no training for getting used to the light, right when it was about to land, it highly raised up its front legs and fell down without being able to control its landing. Despite how its posture mid-air was already bad to begin with, the horse raised the front legs with all it had. Rook and the princess, who were riding on it, started to slip off the horse.

Rook was still fine. The problem was the princess, who was sitting behind him. Without putting any resistance against the gravity, the princess slowly fell off the horse.

“Tch, sorry!”

Rook grabbed the princess' arm and embraced her. And then, he kicked the horse's sides with all his strength. Using the force of the recoil, he jumped off the horse and landed onto the heads of the demons, who had got their eyes blinded and couldn't move.

“Yotto!”(よっと！)

Rook lightly jumped onto the head of a demon and moved on to the next head.

As if he was crossing through islands, Rook was nimbly moving through above the demons. Because the demons were dazzled by the light, there was minimum resistance over being stepped on. By the time the attack would come, Rook would already be moving to the next foothold.

However, this kind of method wouldn't last for long. Once the demons would get used to the light, it would be the end. After only a bit more Rook would be able to escape from this sea of demons. But right at that time, swords and spears were thrust at him, trying to pierce through him. He jumped away as to try to escape from them, but he couldn't spot

any demons that could serve as a foothold nearby anymore. All the demons had regrouped into their battle formation.

But even so, he would still be able to get out of this sea of demons after going for only a bit longer. Once they escaped from the demons, the rest would be easy. Once he took one of the horses, all Rook would need to do was to escape. Finding a demon that didn't look like it would be able to retaliate, Rook was about to jump onto his horse.

However...

“Obediently give up, spiritualist!!”

At the next instant, a sword was pointed right in front of the demon he wanted to jump to. The demon that held the sword invited Rook to come closer to him.

“As if I am giving up!”

Taking off the wig with the hand he was using to hold his sword, Rook threw the wig at the demon with all his strength, aiming for the face. This action was to block the demon's sight. That movement made the demon freeze for a moment. Weaving his way through this gap, Rook jumped onto the demon's head and down to the ground again. Without stopping, he ran past the demon.

“I won't let you run away!”

“You damned scoundrel that used major general Riku's name!!”

Angry yells broke out from all sides.

While being showered by that swirl of killing intent, Rook continued to run. Aiming for that small gap he made in between all the demons, all he did was to keep running. Holding his sword on his right hand and the princess on his left, he ran away without even paying mind to the surroundings. Just like rain, many attacks showered upon him, but he deflected them with his sword for as much as he could. With his cheeks, his arms, clothes getting mangled, he bled in red.

Of course it hurted.

However, what meaning pain had at that point? Rook wasn't soft to the point he would stop just because of this extent of pain.

Although gradually, he definitely could see he was reaching to an exit.

"Princess, only a bit more!"

Muttering next to the princess' ears, Rook increased his speed. And then, when they finally got out from the encirclement of demons... Rook couldn't help but doubt his eyes when he saw what was in front of him.

"Wha!?"

"You've taken quite long, Rook Barusak."

Leivein Adlar was waiting for him.

He was looking straight to Rook while tapping his great sword onto his shoulder. Rook reflexively stopped his feet. He was supposed to have been able to escape after having used all his strength to break out of the encirclement. Why did he end up returning to the same place despite that? Rook couldn't understand.

"You being a spiritualist that controls light is already a known fact. Did you think I wouldn't have taken measures for that?"

Ridiculing the puzzled Rook, Leivein raised the corners of his mouth.

"Measures, you say?"

Protecting the princess, Rook readied his sword.

Behind him was a great number of demons; in front of him was a boss class demon... A tiger at the front and a wolf behind. Regardless which way he was to run away to, the chances of victory were dim. Sweat was gradually accumulating in his hand.

“It is possible to see through the timings and the movement patterns of a light spiritualist. And so, all I need to do is to lead you to an advantageous position for me while you are still crawling on the ground.”

The demons were taller and had better builds than Rook. Being in the middle of all those demons, he couldn't be aware of the situation outside. Besides, because Rook was so much in hurry, he only focused on escaping. Gradually having his sense of direction shifted, Rook was led to another place just like Leivein had planned.

To Leivein, fooling Rook into believing the entrance was the exit was something very simple.

“...So it means I was too focused on running away?”

Rook showed a wry smile.

All he did was nothing more than to run around the cage Leivein built. When thinking of it like that, a very depressing feeling of regret welled up deep in his chest.

“Well, it's fine. In that case, things are simple.”

Rook slightly lowered his stance. Pointing his sword straight to Leivein, he carefully decided where to aim at.

Rook didn't see any demons behind Leivein. In other words, if he was able to break through Leivein, it would be possible for him to escape.

Riku wasn't here, Zerrik had already died, and he didn't see Gortoberuk anywhere around. In other words, the one in command of the army was only Leivein, and if he was able to defeat him, it would be possible to buy time until the Demon Lord was resurrected, or perhaps it might be even possible to stop the scheme of the Demon Lord resurrection itself.

“I... will defeat you!!”

Firming his hold on the princess, Rook put his right foot forward and moved his left foot behind. Ready himself into a stance he would be able to charge forward from at any time, Rook was carefully gauging Leivein's strength.

Leivein Adlar's strength changed depending on the scenario in the game.

Normally, he would be at the level of a mid-boss. However, in case the protagonist got into relationship with Charlotte, his difficulty level would skyrocket.

...In that case, how strong would he be right now? Rook didn't get into a relationship with Charlotte, but in terms of development, the route was similar to the one he would.

Regardless, being careful about Leivein would be for the best.

Infusing light into the sword, Rook strongly kicked the ground with his right foot.

Despite how Rook was approaching, Leivein didn't ready his stance. All he did was to spread out his big black wings in a bored manner. Just by the wings being spread out, a whirlwind was brought forward. A dust cloud rose to the sky, and the gust of wind headed towards Rook.

No, cute words such as [whirlwind] or [gust of wind] weren't enough to describe it.

What happened was a tempest.

The overpowering wind that could cut the body was about to engulf Rook. Before, he was charging forward, but with the tempest that seemed it could send him flying, Rook had to stop.

"...There is no way..."

However, there was no way he could give up at this point.

Going against the wind pressure, Rook raised his sword overhead. Heat concentrated at the point of the sword tinged with light.

“...I am dying...”

Gathering light at the sword, the brightness reached at its apex in a blink of an eye.

In the future ages, Rook Barusak would get referred in a certain nickname... Cladding up in a shine worthy of the name [silver white], Rook rose his silver sword.

“...in a place like this!!”

Mustering all the power he had, he swung the sword down, putting his body weight onto the blow.

A silvery slash was shot from the tip of the sword. That shockwave slash was the flash that pierced through darkness. As the silvery flash raised a howl, it filled the ground with deep crevices. Undaunted by the wind pressure that seemed to blow away all, the flash pushed on against the overwhelming tempest. In an instant, the flash cut through the wind and bared its fangs against Leivein.

“!”

Now was the first time Leivein's expression changed.

After seeing the flood of silvery light approaching him, he drew his great sword. And then, he swung the sword, quickly warding off the flash. Dragging the surrounding air along, Leivein's slash faced the shockwave.

The silvery flash crashed into the pressure made by the stroke of sword. Together with the shockwave, dust clouds spread to all sides. With the sight being covered by the dust, it wasn't possible to see what was in front of the eyes.

Rook reflexively used his right arm to protect his face from the strong shockwave. It was at times like this that it was necessary to be wary of the enemy's attack. Just by softening your guard by an instant, your life would be taken. Even if the enemy would charge at him only in one out of a thousand chances, Rook still spared part of his attention to his surroundings so that he could immediately react to any attack.

It happened at that instant.

“...Kuhah!?”

The dust cloud was suddenly repelled by a gust of wind. Together with the air inside his lungs, fresh blood came out of his mouth.

And then, at the next instant.... The world was turned upside down.

The night sky became downwards and the ground became upwards.

Only after a delay of a few seconds did Rook realize the pain and the fact that he had been hit at his stomach and sent flying. He got hit by a fist head-on and was sent flying to the air. Right before he hit the ground, he somehow was able to take a landing. Because of the ukemi, the impact was lessened, but the pain at his stomach only increased.

As to be expected, he couldn't help but twist his face.

“...Urgh... Such strength.”

Leivein seemed to go beyond the impressions Rook had of him in the game, but after having experienced it personally, Rook could now see there was actually a world's difference.

Thrusting his sword onto the ground and using it as a support, Rook stood up. However, Leivein didn't give Rook the spare time for him to think on his next move.

“This is the end, Rook Barusak.”

Leivein's kick hit Rook at his stomach. (TL note: I don't know what this would mean ->吸い込まれるように<- レーヴェンの足蹴りが、ルークの腹に吸い込まれるように入った)

Rook couldn't defend himself from it, nor could he resist against it. The kick of a dragon demon was something Rook had never felt until now. As reference, it could be said it was

close to the impact of being sent flying by a truck. Even when taking a defensive stance, without any of the impact being mitigated, a human would only easily be blown away.

Receiving the strong impact, Rook once again was sent flying to the sky.

It surpassed the standards of what it could be described as [pain].

Silvery particles scattered around in his view. Starting from the sides, his sight was becoming colored in black just like curtains closing.

And then...



# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 94**

# 94.RUNNING THROUGH THE DARKNESS OF NIGHT

“Uwaah!?”

Rook’s body hit something soft.

No, he was embraced. He was embraced into a warm chest. The sound of the heart beating reverberated next to him.

Rook couldn’t understand what happened. Before, he thought he was going to fall onto the ground or onto the hard stone, or perhaps even fall onto the spear of a demon and have himself pierced by it. What could it have been that caught him?

“What... could have...?”

As his consciousness was fading away, he barely managed raise his eyelids. When he did that, there was a silver hair fluttering in his view.

Narrowing his eyes, Rook gazed at the hair. He had the feeling of having seen that long hair before, but he couldn’t remember whose hair it was. By the time Rook gave up on thinking about it, he heard the voice of the owner of the hair right next to him.

“What Rook, are you already worn out?”

“This voice... Raku-ane?”

Because of how surprised Rook was, his body woke up somewhat and let out a groan because the pain at his back. Seeing how Rook was acting, Raku Barusak gave a loud laugh.

“Like always, you are stupid. You leisurely go out by yourself, get immediately caught

and get close to dying. I wonder how you would be by now if I hadn't come save you."

However, in contrast to Raku's happy tone of voice, she had a serious expression. While quickly glancing through the surroundings, she kept sending hand signals to the spiritualists that were running towards her into a formation around them.

Before his notice, Rook had suddenly already crossed through the sea of demons. He could hear the yelling sounds of the demons and the metallic sound of swords clashing behind him from the distance.

This was nothing more than a guess, but the spiritualists probably had aimed for somewhere where the vigilance of the demons was low and launched a surprise attack. Using sheer force, they escaped the front lines of the battle after having rescued Rook.

Raku had come to save Rook.

Right when a warm feeling was forming inside Rook's heart, doubt was brought about.

"Why are you here? After all, Raku-ane.... should have been together... with Raimon."

The knowledge of the game started surfacing at the back of his mind.

At this point in time, Raku Barusak was Raimon Barusak's subordinate and would do all just as he would tell her to. In order to stop Raimon's plans, it would be necessary to capture Raku into the harem.

However, he didn't proceed her route to that point. Rather, he had kept doing actions that would cause her to hate him instead. He had caused many worries for everyone at the battle of Karkata, and also at the battle of Sherr island.

By now, there was no way she would view him favorably.

Instead, it was clear she would let him die while thinking of it as something "well deserved". However...

"Hmph, I cut off my relations with father. All the way through, you know?"

Raku declared.

Saying those words with a somewhat angry voice, she gently embraced Rook.

“There is no way I could abandon this little brother of mine seeing how much trouble he brings me, you see? ...Now, let’s refocus on the problem at hands for the moment. We’ve already identified their destination, so we are pulling back from here and reorganizing our troops. We can go rescue the princess later.”

Raku quickly muttered next to Rook’s ears.

At that time, Rook finally realized that the princess wasn’t in his hands. He hurriedly tried to turn his head back, but he couldn’t move his body. The exhaustion and pain reached at the extreme limits and it felt that his consciousness would be cut off at any moment.

“At the time you were sent flying, you let go of the princess. ...Don’t worry, she is still living. She is needed for the resurrection ritual after all.”

...Since that was the case, then all that had to be done was to simply go save her.

Raku lightly patted Rook’s back in order to calm him down.

As if that was the signal for it, Rook, who was trying to remain conscious, fell asleep. With a warm feeling wrapped around his body as if he was being submerged inside a bathtub, Rook closed his heavy eyelids.

Yes, if the princess wasn’t in their hands, they wouldn’t be able to resurrect the Demon Lord.

However, in the same way, if they didn’t have Rook too, neither would it be possible to do so.

Leivein was certain that Rook was coming to save the princess. That was why Raku didn’t pursue him any further.

And so being the case... then he might as well have some rest himself during the time.

Rook had gone through a day-to-day life he couldn't sleep; in unfavorable conditions and with stench wafting in the air.

Rook's body was at its limit.

He was now preparing himself for the decisive battle that was to come after that short break.

---

The darkness of night approached.

That was the Demon Lord army.

Following behind was the Barusak personal troops commanded by Raku.

Besides them, there was one more force; one small shadow riding through the dark of the night.

It was Riku Barusak.

After killing Raimon Barusak, she immediately stole a horse and escaped. However, for some weird reason, she didn't feel the presence of pursuers.

Moreover, the security of the Barusak residence was shallow. Even though Raimon fell from his office room, there weren't any signs of someone rushing to where he fell to check what happened.

It was just as if all of the people at that place went out for the exception of Raimon...

"Well, it doesn't matter to me."

She wouldn't go back to the Barusak residence ever again.

She was heading to the land of the seal, trying to get there as soon as possible so that she could become of assistance even if by only a little. She was resolved in receiving punishment for going against her orders. With how she was already going to get punished from the time she escaped from the Demon Lord castle, she didn't mind that the punishment would get a bit more severe.

Rather, only if she was to stay at the castle that she would have fallen in regret.

In that case, it would be better to go for the path she wouldn't regret. To fight to the bitter end without any regrets and to live her life to the fullest until the very end. Was there anything to be ashamed of by doing that? No, there wasn't.

"Besides... as I thought, I really have things I want to ask...."

While clenching her teeth, Riku whipped her horse.

If Riku's calculations were right, there were a few hours remaining until the Demon Lord Army would arrive at the land of the seal. In case she wasn't to meet the time, it was possible she would be missing it by even an hour. If she was to keep riding her horse at full speed, the chances of her making in time were fifty-fifty.

"Really, why does it have to be today that it is cloudy."

Riku looked up at the sky irritated.

If only the stars showed up in the sky, she would have been able to find the directions from it. However, not only the stars, but even the shine of the moon was being blocked by thick clouds and wouldn't reach the land. Only the lantern she tied at the front of her horse would give her line-of-sight.

Riku wished she had brought Vrusto or someone that would fit his role along her if she had known that her sight would become that bad after night. Although she regretted not having done that, she immediately shook away the thought. By guessing from the time she took advice from Vrusto, there was no mistake he would dismiss the idea as her going against her orders and would increase the amount of guards.

Most of her excellent subordinates were headed to the land of the seal, and it also wasn't possible to bring Asty, who was tasked with the protection of Myuuz castle. While it is at this late hour to be thinking of that, she was aware of how few the amount of people among her subordinates that would do as she wished were.

“Really... Hm?”

It happened at that time.

A dazzling light shone through the surroundings. Then, Riku stopped her horse.

At a place not so far from there, light overflowed. The beam of flash pierced through the darkness and cut through the clouds. It was like a pillar of light that reached the starry sky.

“...What could it be, that light...?”

Narrowing her eyes, Riku gazed at the light.

The light finally grew dim and vanished, seeming as if it had set the night sky free again. Only, fortunately, the sky continued to be clear. From the gap that was cut in between the clouds, the moonlight shone onto the road.

Riku glanced at the positions of the stars. Conveniently, the direction the light came from was the same direction she was heading towards. Besides, the light came from somewhere close to the surrounding region of the land the Demon Lord was sealed at.

“... Has the war already started?”

Kicking the sides of the horse, Riku once again started moving. Hitting her whip on the buttocks of the horse, she made it run faster. Until a few moments ago, she had been moving while constantly checking around where she should go. However, now with the clouds cleared, she didn't need to worry about it as much. She knew the directions. Now, all she needed to do was to keep riding on the same direction.

It would be a piece of cake.

Nothing to mind too much about...

It happened at the next moment.

“!?”

Suddenly, a spear showed up right in front of her horse.

Because the horse became surprised by the sudden attack, it raised both its front legs with a force that was shaking off its rider. Riku hurriedly held control of the reins. By a hair's breath she didn't fall from her horse. ...However, her horse agitation continued. After fixing her posture, Riku turned her eyes to the direction the spear came from... and then, she raised a surprised voice.

“Why are you here?”

“This is my line, general Riku.”

At the same time of the response, the second attack followed. Riku made her horse slightly hop and was able to evade the horse. And then, she released her hands from the reins.

“...I see, you were the pursuer.”

Quickly drawing her halberd, she took a battle stance.

When she did that, the demon that was wielding his spear showed a bold smile. Being bathed by the moonlight, the fangs being bared at her sharply shone.

It was the demon that had been tasked with taking care of her for those ten years.

It wasn't exaggeration to say that he was well familiar with Riku's habits in battle, and also her line of thought.



It was him the one that had been suspicious about Riku planning to escape since the beginning. Somehow, Riku could understand that.

As sweat showed up at her forehead, Riku muttered the name of that person.

“Vrusto Asuteroid.”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 95**

# 95.VRUSTO'S ALL OR NOTHING CHARGE

“Good grief, ojou-chan really got me surprised there.”

Vrusto sighed.

“Your smell went on through the Barusak residence after all. There is some smell of blood mixed in. Did you fight someone there?”

His tone of voice was nonchalant, but the mood wrapping around him was one of seriousness. With his glint on his eyes sharp, he was glaring at Riku.

“This is against the orders, you know? Who was it you had to kill for you to go your way escape on your own like that?”

Without giving any response, Riku silently fixed her hold on the halberd.

Disobeying orders was an act that disarranged military order. Therefore, it was given a proportional punishment to the transgressors. In Riku's case, it wasn't weird even if she was to be claimed as having fled to human territory after going against her orders. (TL note: Not sure about the first line... 命令違反は軍旗を乱す行いだ)

The punishment for deserting was the heaviest.... It was death sentence.

It wouldn't be weird if Vrusto had come to kill her.

“Hey, hey.... Won't you explain, ojou-chan?”

Riku narrowed her eyes and watched his attitude.

There were no openings in his posture. However, for some strange reason, there were no signs there would be an attack coming. After pondering about for a while, Riku opened her lips, which before were tightly shut.

“It doesn’t matter who it was. More importantly, is your business with me only that? I am in hurry here. Can’t you move aside?”

If possible, she wanted to avoid fighting him. There was no way she could exhaust her stamina here despite how the time of the decisive battle was approaching.

However, Vrusto snorted, as if sneering at her.

“That’s a bit too much for a joke. By now, what is the point for ojou-chan to go after them by yourself?”

It seems Vrusto wouldn’t let her pass. Riku mentally clicked her tongue.

Vrusto had been together with her for ten years. Moreover, he was also her caretaker. It wasn’t exaggeration to say he knew by heart about her habits in battle, personality or movement patterns.

However, this was the same for Riku. She learned her techniques from Vrusto and improved on them.

“I won’t know that unless I try it.”

If Riku’s memories were correct, the last time she dueled against him was at Sherr island. Killing time until their plan would unfold, they sparred against each other. At that time, it was difficult for Riku to beat Vrusto, who would hit right at her weak points. Fortunately, Riku won then, but now she had only one arm. The chances of her to be able to parry his attacks and cause fatal damage should be about half.

Therefore, once it became a serious fight... It wouldn’t be possible to take it lightly.

At the moment either side was to lose focus, there would be no hesitations... The finishing blow would be dealt.

“Ojou-chan, do you think you will be able to kill with with only one hand?”

“...As if.”

As she smiled, she was moving her horse.

With a slight of a combat stance, she leisurely approached Vrusto.(TL note: I´m not sure how to translate that to ->構えを解き<- to english T.T It means when you are in a sword stance where you are not necessarily going to attack the enemy, but that you are ready to react to any attack should the enemy try to attack you.)

“It feels that it will be tough to beat you with only one arm. That´s why I will follow what you say.”

Riku casted down her eyes.

The negotiations were a failure. Even if she was to carry on, it would be meaningless in the end. In that case, there was only one option she could take...

“That´s the rational decision. To think you would obediently give in...”

“Yes. After all, it is impossible to beat you with the way I am right now... That is...”

Riku´s and Vrusto´s horses were standing next to each other. In the next instant...

“...without killing you, you see.”

While saying that, Riku swung her halberd.

Cutting through the wind, she aimed at his neck. However, it seemed Vrusto read through her attack. Vrusto turned his body away and aimed his spear at Riku´s chest. Rotating the halberd in her hand, Riku deflected the spear thrust at her.

Because of the force, both horses were pushed back away from each other. Some space was made in between them.

“Tch.”

“Stupid, you are thinking too naive.”

Provoking Riku, Vrusto barked.

“Coming forward after the opponent lowered his guard. This kind of thing has always been your favorite trick. There is no way I wouldn’t be on guard, you know!”

While saying that, he once again swung his spear. Giving a dreadfully distinctive shout, he continued to attack. As if the angry howl he brought from the depths of his chest was interconnected to his strength, even the might of his attacks increased. In the time Riku parried those attacks, she would be careful of his arms and legs more than she would usually be. Since she was a child, Vrusto would always make her know that battling wasn’t only attacking head-on in his training. He was handling his spear right now, but it would be weird if he threw his fist at her at the next instant.(TL note: Not sure about this ->一音、一音、やけにはっきりと大声で叫びながら槍を振り続ける<-)

With that said, she didn’t think punches and kicks would be useful in a horseback fight though.

“Quietly, accept your, defeat!”

“Even if you say that, your spear handling is rough, you know?”

Sharpening her reflexes, Riku also accepted the challenge.

Fortunately, while Vrusto’s handling with his spear was quite good, it wasn’t above Riku. Perhaps because the halberd attacks were heavy, every time he received an attack, his face would start showing off a deep complexion of pain. It was clear Vrusto would lose if this “head-on attacking” was to continue.

Riku was intending on sparing him if he was to accept his complete defeat considering the time they spent along. ....However, Vrusto wasn’t the type of man that would choose to

do something like that.

“...You’ve become... a bit stronger, haven’t you?”

Hence, this was a battle at one’s life in risk; a battle full of unpredictable attacks.

“Thank you. But is this all you have?”

What Riku needed to be careful of was the weapon he was hiding with him, whether it was a knife, an explosive, or perhaps a flash bomb that would blind the eye. Perhaps he was going to throw his spear to have her attention averted and use that to throw in a knife or something of the sort.

“I am one-armed. Could it be you are taking it easy on me?”

“Hey, hey, it’s obvious I am taking it seriously!? Rather, isn’t your breath getting rough? Aren’t you getting tired?”

“What a joke. I can still keep on long enough.”

Being cornered, what kind of attack would Vrusto show?

Riku came up with some methods he could use, but she wasn’t able to guess to the point of knowing when he would use them. After pondering over it for a while, Riku raised the corners of her mouth with the feeling of happiness.

“Your arms... They lowered a little?”

Riku was showing an opening on purpose.

She also softened her expression and acted carefree.

Of course, Vrusto should have definitely understood that that was a trap. However, it still didn’t mean it wasn’t an opportunity.

“Han? Don’t get over yourself, you brat!”

Vrusto threw his spear. This was within Riku’s expectations. There was no mistake he had thrown a knife or something similar at the same time, having it hidden at the shadow of the spear.

If you knew what was going to happen beforehand, it would be easy to react. Lightly holding the reins, Riku made the horse move away from the attack. There was no need to deflect the spear with the halberd. Vrusto’s spear pierced the ground behind Riku. Moreover, Vrusto was still in the same stance he had when he threw the spear. The knife-like object, or whatever else dangerous weapon that had been thrown wasn’t able to make the miracle.

Riku couldn’t see any signs showing that Vrusto had another card to play.

“Shit, I missed!?”

“Did you think you would take me by surprise with only this much? ....Are you making fun of me?”

In horseback fights, losing one’s weapon was equal to losing the battle. Now that he used his hidden ace, he didn’t have any cards left in his hand that he could use.

“This is the end, second lieutenant Vrusto.”

It was easy to bring down an unarmed knight.

Unlikely to how it would usually be around Vrusto, Riku was having a bit of a bad feeling over him. But even so, Riku still was certain of her victory... But then it happened at the next instant.

\*Chirin(ちりん)

She heard a soft sound from behind.



Riku reflexively turned back to the sound, but there was nobody there. However, there was no mistake she heard something. Glancing around, she spotted that the iron fittings of the spear pierced on the ground was shining. There was a small bell tied to the spear. No, it wasn't only a bell. There was a line. The bell was connected to an extremely thin line. Glancing through at the string by her side, when her eyes arrived at the end of the string that was being pulled...

“It can't be!?”

As if throwing her face into Vrusto's direction, she turned her eyes to him. The string was tied around Vrusto's wrist. In other words, the ring of the bell was in order to have Riku's attention diverted.

“Even if you noticed now, it is too late!”

Vrusto had jumped off from his horse towards Riku. Like how the words would describe... it was a suicidal attack.

In order to defend against Vrusto's claws, Riku hurriedly repositioned her halberd. Having suspected of Vrusto's plan right at the instant he jumped at her, it had indeed been by a hair's breadth.

“Like I thought, your head really isn't working.”

Right at the time Riku swept her halberd horizontally against the suicidal attack, Vrusto bent his body. The halberd lost its target and ended up hitting only the air. Just like that, without being able to stop Vrusto's attack...

“Damn...!?”

...Vrusto's claws deeply sunk into the horse's chest and perforated it up to its abdomen. As to be expected, the horse couldn't endure against that attack. The horse raised a cry due to the pain and had his front legs crumbled down.

“Tch.”

As a result of the horse shaking, Riku slipped off the horse. She took a posture to take the

fall and landed on the ground on her knee. The sharp claws were pointed right next to Riku's throat.

That claw was the same that had pierced the horse and gone all the way to from his chest to its stomach. There was no mistake it could easily gorge something like the neck of a human.

“...So that's where it ends...?”

While feeling the hardness of the claws at her neck, Riku muttered in a small voice. Vrusto looked at her with uninterested eyes.

“Hey, hey, it is too fast for you to be giving up. So you were really worn out in the end?”

While taking out an object with his free hand, Vrusto said, being somewhat surprised.(TL note: It doesn't say where he takes it out from -.-)

“Normally you would be suspicious if your opponent kept shouting in order to hide the sound of a bell, you know? Since you weren't able to realize it means that you were all tired.”

Moving his claws away from her neck, Vrusto pressed onto Riku's hand a cold bottle of sorts. Looking at it, Riku saw it was a canteen made for military use. Seeming like there was a lot of water inside, the splashing sound of the water shaking could be heard.

“Go rest for a while. If you were to join the war when you are tired like this, you would only be a hassle.”

“But...”

“There is still time until captain Leivein launches the attack. Hurry is the enemy of perfection.”

Vrusto also sat down on the ground and brought out the jerky that was used as emergency mantiments. The killing intent Riku felt in her skin disappeared like mist, and Vrusto wasn't behaving like he would come attack her anymore. Riku thought about the possibility of this being an act, but it didn't look to be the case in the end. While wondering in

puzzlement, Riku smelled the water. There were no suspicious smells, and when she took a sip, it didn't felt like there was anything different in particular.

It was really only water.

"...I was sure you came here to stop me."

"You aren't a girl that would be convinced to stop like that, right? Even if I brought you back, you would definitely still put resistance. And so, although it is a bit of a pain in the ass, I had to go have you rest by force."

While chewing the jerky with his white teeth, Vrusto answered Riku's question. He wasn't even looking at Riku. As if he was examining the surroundings, the glint in his eyes shone through the darkness of the night.

"...And besides..."

"And besides?"

Riku repeated Vrusto's words, but he didn't continue them. A moment of silence passed. When Riku was about to ask him again, Vrusto finally turned his eyes back to Riku. And then, raising up his hand that grew sharp claws...

"It is the responsibility of the instructor for the misconducts of his disciple. Now that it became like that, I will be following you around to the end."

He lightly patted Riku's shoulder.

It was blunt and rough. However, somehow it felt like a gentle manner of patting. Rubbing at the place she was patted at, Riku gazed at her another right-hand man other than Roppu Nezaarand.

"It's none of my business if you die."

"Stupid, I was resolved to die when I joined the Dragon Demon Division."

Everything is fine, so go to rest already.

Hearing those words, sleepiness welled up deep inside her body.

Then, she remembered that for that period of few days she came, she pretty much didn't sleep. Without resting since then, she had been riding her horse towards the land of the seal.

It was obvious she was sleepy.

“...Wake me up after three hours.”

“Understood, major general Riku.”

Without waiting for the response, Riku closed her heavy eyelids.

And just like that, she fell in deep sleep.

“Hmm, even though it would have been interesting if she had killed that guy. I wonder why he became her ally.”

There was a shadow merged in the darkness of the night whispering in boredom.

It was the shinigami. He was looking at the conversation between Riku and Vrusto while he was flapping his black wings.

“Rook and Raku also got together.... Maybe things will get a bit more stirred up.”

In a happy grin, the shinigami raised the corners of his mouth.

The more all the sorts of emotions were to get mixed up, more would the “accuracy” of the soul increase. (TL note: I dunno what accuracy means there -.- Besides, it doesn't seem to be a typo. I guess it will be explained later ^^)

If the accuracy of the soul increased, it would make a banquet of taste that was difficult to run out of words to describe it.

The souls of Riku Barusak and Rook Barusak were indeed the apex of ecstasy itself. By just imagining about the future like that made his mouth was becoming overflown with saliva.

However, he would still wait. If he added a bit more seasoning, it would turn to an even higher level of tastiness.

“Although I need to properly be dealing with the irregulars of the world, in the end, I really want to have my meal once I am finished raising them to become delicious.”

While showing a smile of joy, he flew.

He was headed to the land of the seal of the Demon Lord, the [Valley of Twilight].

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 96**

# 96.THE ASSAULT

Up to what point was destiny predetermined.

Believing in oneself and continuing to recklessly run forward. Without looking away or straying from one's journey, she had been absorbed into swinging the sword.

However, sometimes... For instance, in the times when she would look up at the moon, there were times she would end up wondering whether she was walking on a path that was designed by someone. Perhaps this was what it would be called as the "predestined future".

Of course, there was no way she could accept all the unexpected occurrences that happened until now as something that was along weak words such as [destiny]. Instead, she hated the most about how you could casually deal with things by using words such as destiny.

However, what if... what if the whole path she had been deciding herself... was all something that had already been decided?

In that instance, she would definitely...

\_\_\_\_\_

"Oh no! I was one step late."

After glancing at the disastrous scene under his eyes, Rook clenched his teeth.

The land of the seal of the Demon Lord... [The Valley of Twilight]. Its entrance was such a horrid view to the point it made one want to avert one's eyes. It was difficult to see the situation because he was seeing down the valley from over the cliff... but even so, it was so bad to the point it was possible to be assured there wasn't anyone alive.

Even the elite chosen spiritualists of each of the families had all died.

Heads separated from the torsos; a huge hole gorged at the stomach being only the obvious. There were corpses that had their faces smashed to the point it was impossible to discern one from another and there were also corpses that you couldn't make out how the body used to look like to the point it made you wonder whether that really used to be a human.

The smell of blood that would choke people arose to the air. Rook reflexively dug his face into his muffler so that he could avoid the smell of blood.

However, he would still end up feeling the smell of death on his skin despite that.

The valley of twilight was filled with death.

“...”

After clearing his throat, Rook turned his head behind him.

Behind him were the spiritualists, being commanded by Raku and waiting for orders. All those girls had their faces twisted in the same pattern. However, while their expressions were the same, each had their own individual differences. One of them was angry about the tragedy caused by the demons, and another one was sad of the death of her comrades. And also... there was another person that had her face pale, imagining the hell that awaited for her.

“...Raku-ane, everyone... I would like you to listen to me.”

Straightening his back, Rook looked straight at each of them.

“What is waiting for us is an unimaginable hell. And so, the people that are scared of dying... may head back.”

Actually, he himself was the one most scared. He couldn't endure the fear.

He was the one that most wanted to run away with his tail between his legs.



“Everyone, I won’t mind if you don’t follow me. After all, you have a family to go back to, and have a future. If you choose to follow me, perhaps you might not have another chance to live your life. That’s why, the ones that are scared may leave. Only... I will still go. Even if it is by myself.”

As if so he could convince himself to be able to press on until his last step, Rook continued his talking, pressing on word by word.

“We need to stop the resurrection of the Demon Lord. ....Even if my life is to become an exchange for that... I want to save this world.”

Rook slightly casted down his eyes and hit his hand on his chest.

He was aware that the one that killed Charlotte was him.

He was the reason why the princess was taken away and had her heart broken.

In a certain way, it wouldn’t be exaggeration to say that he was the main cause for all that happened.

No matter how many times he was to repent, it wouldn’t be enough. No matter how many times he was to regret, regret would still remain.

That was why he needed to express all that in his actions. That is even if he had to give his life for it.

“If the Demon Lord resurrects, the world will be destroyed. The humans.... and even the demons will all be annihilated. The reason it became like that, was because of me.... Actually, it is fine if you don’t follow me. Yes, this... is something I must do myself.”

Rook thought back about the knowledge of the game.

In case you failed to capture Charlotte into the harem, it wasn’t even needed to be asked; it would lead to the bad end. Let alone the spiritualists, even the common people and all life would become extinct.

However, on the other way around.... In other words, if Charlotte's capture was successful, the situation would change.

The resurrected demon lord would see that [Charlotte fell in love with a human] and decide that not only the humans, but the demons that [raised Charlotte to be such a fool also had responsibility], thus burn everything down. (TL note: I guess it is comparing the bad ending where only the humans get screwed and the bad ending everyone dies.)

This would be the same now that Charlotte died.

He would press the responsibility on the demons who made up reasons to kill Charlotte and everyone would be exterminated in the same way.

In other words, if he isn't able to stop the resurrection, there was no mistake that the worst bad ending would happen. Rook definitely couldn't accept an end where the humans and demons wouldn't be happy.

"That's why... only the people that have the resolution to die together with me may come!!"

Rook looked forward and declared words of resolve.

There were no responses for those words. No, there weren't any response that made use of spoken words.

First Raku, and then the spiritualists behind began to have their eyes burn with fighting spirit.

It was the resolve to stop the unsealing of the Demon Lord. They grasped the resolution to keep fighting until their lives were to be lost.

For a moment, Rook started to feel like crying.

There was no mistake it was because of him that they could charge at their death. Even if it was their wish to die in battle, if Rook was to really be thinking about their well-being,

he should have them sent back to their home even if by force.

In the end, the reason why he didn't do that was because he was aware he couldn't win by himself.

“...Alright, let's go.”

He wouldn't be able to stop the resurrection of the Demon Lord without sacrifices. He would use their strength and stop it with all he had. Being the one leading this group, this was his mission.

Rook silently drew his sword. The blade of the sword shone with the moonlight and glittered in silver. The face that was being reflected by the blade wasn't one of stupidity anymore.

It was the face of a man that made his resolve.

Displaying his sword, he breathed in air in one go, and then...

“Raise your war cries!! Charge!!”

“””Uooooooooh!!!”

All at once, they charged with their horses.

With a speed that dazzled the eyes, they rode down the cliff at full speed as they raised dust clouds. They were just like an avalanche.

If this was a development just like the game, the situation would be one that the demons would be thrown into confusion by reinforcements they didn't expect and run away to all sides disorganized. However, Rook learned he should stop relying on his knowledge of the game.

In fact, the demon archers immediately got into a formation to start shooting them down. Drawing the arrows in their bows, they started to shoot at the spiritualists that were going down the cliff.

Of course, being the horses raised by the Barusak, they were trained so that they wouldn't get scared by the rain of arrows. However, they would stop moving when an arrow hit them or would even jump up because of the pain. As they were going down the cliff, it was possible to see how the horses that would lose their balance even if for a bit would end.

Being rained by the arrows, the horses that received fatal injuries would misstep, and their riders would fall down together with them as they still sat on their back.

The weeping cries of the horses and the screams of the spiritualists echoed through the valley. Rook unconsciously started to feel like covering his eyes.

However, there was no way he could cover his eyes here. If he was to avert his eyes from the valley even if for only a bit, he would do mistakes in handling his horse and would also get hit by the arrows. May this happen, he would only be repeating the same mistake the spiritualists that fell down had done.

“Goooooooo!! Press forward!!!”

As if answering for Rook's shouts, the horses continued to charge.

Even with their whole body being showered by arrows, the horses didn't lose their balance, nor did they raise any cries.

Much more now they kept going forward, and they finally reached upon the demon military forces. One of the demons that was about to shoot more arrows was jumped at by Rook's horse. The sound of his neck breaking could be heard by the hooves.

“Follow Rook!!”

Rook heard Raku's voice from behind.

Following behind Rook, the spiritualists behind him also had their horses jump onto the demons. Using the horses as if they were weapons, the skillful spiritualists concentrated their demon banning power at the hooves of the horse. Now with demon banning power gathered at their legs, the horses pulverised the hard carapaces or resilient armor of the

demons.

“Spiritualist reinforcements!! Immediately repel those forces!!”

“It is not enough with only the scouting squad! We need to call for reinforcements from the troops.”

“As if we would let you, demons!”

The swords of the spiritualists and demons clashed against each other.

The violent metallic sounds echoed through the valley and made the ears hurt. As he parried against a demon with his sword, Rook glanced through at the place where the entrance to the shortcut to the seal was.

Rook was aware that at that place that seemed to be nothing more than a gap between rocks at one glance was actually the shortcut path to the seal.

“Alright, if it is now, I...!?”

“As if I would let you, brat!!”

Rook noticed that a huge shadow approached him from above right before he could rush to the gap between the rocks.

Rook jumped from the back of his horse and escaped to the ground. Right at the instant after that, together with a tremor that made the ground shake, the horse Rook had been riding on was assaulted by a huge club. The horse was crushed by the club without even enough time for it to raise a cry.

This had indeed been by a hair’s breadth.

“Hou, so you avoided it. Aren’t you a lucky brat?”

“You...”

The one standing in Rook's way was a big cow demon.

The demon had bulging muscles and a height that made you need to look up to look at him. He would casually move the club that was as huge as himself.

Rook watched him carefully.

For as far as he knew, the cow demon in front of his eyes was someone that should have died at the battle at Myuuz. ...Originally, he would have been killed by Selestinna. He was a demon that wasn't supposed to be at the last decisive battle.

With his lips that felt they would start to tremble, Rook called the demon's name as cold sweat ran through his forehead.

“...Rudogar Gortoberuk!!”

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 97**

# 97.THE OBSTINACY OF THE OLD GENERAL

I have to run away.

That's what his instincts told him. A line of sweat ran down his forehead.

While keeping his eyes on Gortoberuk, he confirmed where his horse was at the edge of his sight. The horse was completely wrecked. It was probably due to the impact it received from the club. Those vigorous eyes of a few moments ago became blank and foam was surging from its mouth. No matter what, it was impossible for it to suddenly stand up or jump around.

“Shit.”

There was a wide hole that behind Gortoberuk. At the other side of that hole was where the Demon Lord was sealed. Rook had been a few centimeters away from that hole. Fortunately, Gortoberuk wasn't riding a horse. Although he could stand in the way of the hole this way, his mobility wasn't the same if he was riding one.

Rook was greatly lacking the speed to be able to accomplish the feat of dodging Gortoberuk and slipping past him. It was a very hard blow that he ended up losing his horse.

“But... Do I have any other choice?”

The walkthrough guide on how to beat Gortoberuk faintly remained in his head.

Rook dragged out those memories that were all covered in dust. If his memory served him right, the way to kill Gortoberuk would be to avert his attention with the bow. Then, drawing the sword into that opening made, you would cut his head off. Of course, Gortoberuk was a demon experienced in warfare. He was a man that lived many times the



lifespan of a human and devoted his life to war. It was hard to believe it was possible to distract him so easily.

Indeed, it was because Selestinna would be together with him that it would be possible to defeat Gortoberuk. It was because she was an archer that it would be possible to defeat him. Now, as for looking for someone that had the same amount of skill with the bow as her in this battlefield...

“There is... nobody but me.”

Rook moved his hand to his bow.

His bow was gifted to him by Selestinna herself. He wasn't as good with it as he was with his sword, but he had confidence in his barely passable skills. If he is capable of using this bow well, he could create a gap in Gortoberuk's defenses and perhaps be able to break through him.

Rather, he needed to break through him at all costs.

“Hou, an archer. Could it be you are that girl's subordinate?”

There was a tinge of interest in Gortoberuk's eyes.

“I'm not her subordinate.”

However, from this distance, there is no way he would be able to create a gap. Moving back the hand he had moved to his bow, Rook once again

“Selestinna is my...”

One of my harem members? Lover? Friend?

No, it wasn't any of those. He liked her, but that was because he liked that girl that appeared at the game. The feelings he held for real Selestinna Bistolru weren't as naive as something like. That feeling that surged up when Selestinna was killed at that time was...

“My precious childhood friend!”

Rook’s sword and Gortoberuk’s club crashed into each other.

Gortoberuk’s weight was carried into the club, overwhelming Rook. Rook clenched his teeth and tried to push forward with all his power. However, he narrowly was able to give up on the idea. Even if he was able to push him back, after that, it would be him that would be giving Gortoberuk an opening. He couldn’t imagine himself immediately making a follow-up after the attack.

“... To think you wouldn’t crumble before my attack. You hold a good sword.”

Gortoberuk muttered in praise. It seems that Gortoberuk had also put considerable power onto it. Sweat started to appear on his forehead. With a face full of sweat, Rook said “Thanks”.

“However, your body should soon be reaching its limits, young spiritualist. Do you wish to keep this on and get crushed?”

“No way!”

Rook tried to answer back brazenly, but in fact, it was already difficult for him to keep his stance. Of course, he didn’t have the spare time to put an arrow on his bow. Casting down his eyes, Rook set his resolve.

“I will end this here!”

At the moment Rook looked at Gortoberuk, without pushing forward, he released the sword. Whether Gortoberuk noticed or not was was going to happen, at that instant, he jumped back.

“Wha-!?”

By the time Gortoberuk noticed it, it was already too late. The competition of strength suddenly ended and Gortoberuk fell forward while still holding his club. It seems he was

putting too much strength onto it. The club, which had Gortoberuk's weight and power concentrated at, violently sank into the ground. In result of that, the place Rook had been standing until now was smashed, making a circle-shaped hole. If Rook was late by one second at the timing to dodge, his head would have literally been smashed to pieces.

“With that...”

Taking the bow with his free hand, Rook put an arrow at the left side with natural movements. Pulling the bowstring about where his chin was, he aimed forward.

“...it is the end!”

And then, before Gortoberuk could regain his posture, Rook shot the arrow.

The arrow flew through the air. It was heading straight to Gortoberuk's heart. It wasn't from a distance Gortoberuk would have the time to move his club back or to dodge the arrow.

“Guhah...!”

Bending his body, Gortoberuk barely avoided the trajectory of the arrow.

However, that arrow that was aimed at the middle of his chest still dug into the right part of his chest. A hole opened at his chest and blood came out of his mouth.

“Alright.”

After giving a glance at Gortoberuk's crouching figure, he ran forward.

However, Gortoberuk wouldn't let things end there. The instant he heard the sound of Rook approaching him, he reflexively brought his club out, raising it overhead. Gortoberuk's club was approaching Rook as it rotated at the air. He had thrown his club in his last attack. That was the obstinacy of the brave general that wouldn't be taken down; that was even if he had to fall, and even with those heavy injuries that were more than enough to kill him.

It wasn't as fast as the arrow had been. However, Rook was now running towards him. Because Rook had closed his distance with Gortoberuk, he wasn't able to immediately stop running at that moment.

“Sorry!”

However, there was no way Rook would stop there.

Crouching down, he put his right leg forward, sliding at the ground. It was by a hair's breadth.

The club grazed through Rook's hair. It's wind pressure made him close one of his eyes. Despite that, he picked up the sword that was fallen near Gortoberuk and successfully slipped into the cavern.

Continuing on without turning back to Gortoberuk, Rook ran through the dark cavern.

Everything was for the sake of saving the princess and stopping the resurrection of the Demon Lord.

Without stopping to move, Rook Barusak continued to run through the darkness.

---

“.....Very, commendable.”

Gortoberuk was still crouching in front of the opening of the cave.

He had let go of his weapon and also didn't have any spare sword. As he was pressing onto the hole at his chest with his remaining hand, the brave general couldn't hide his rough breathing.

“So the old generals, must depart....”

Rook Barusak.

He was the anticipated star of the spiritualists who had the same bloodline as Riku Barusak, the upcoming major general of the Demon Lord army. Although he heard from Asty, his grandchild, that Rook had been driven away from the spiritualist army. However, just by looking at him was it possible to know that it was much more now that he had been driven out that people followed him, having the popularity to be able to lead the army. No matter where he was to look, there was nobody that had crossed blades with Gortoberuk in the battlefield before. All the spiritualist following Rook were filled with youth.

Both the old generals of the Demon Lord army and the spiritualist army would have departed, and the young would rise and go on. In a certain meaning, for him to die here was perhaps inevitable. Gortoberuk was slightly casting down his eyes...

“... But I cannot let it end here.”

He once again opened his eyes.

The battle was still going on. By looking around, he could see the battle of his own subordinates against the spiritualists unfolding. However, it seemed that they were being overwhelmed by their lower numbers.

“Follow after Rook!”

“We also must quickly catch up to him and give him our support!”

Suddenly, some spiritualists broke through the encirclement and were now coming at Gortoberuk.

There was no way he could let them through. Even though they were the enemy, it was very regrettable to him to be crushing the new sprouts. However, the protection of this place had been entrusted to him. With that being said, there was no way he could allow anyone to get through any further.

“Don’t get over yourselves, spiritualists.”

He imposingly stood in front of the cave.

The spiritualists clicked their tongue, each readying their own weapon. Ready her bow, a spiritualist wearing a white robe fired many arrows. The arrows that were shot from someone mounting a horse dug into Gortoberuk's right eye, arm, and also his legs. Although holes opened at him, and although he bled, Gortoberuk didn't fall. After that, three spiritualists aimed at his chest with spears. All the spears were being aimed at his heart, being thrust from the right, the left, and the middle. A painful complexion spread on Gortoberuk's face. However, he still didn't fall. Perhaps because he kept clenching his teeth in order to endure the pain, his teeth shattered, and white fragments scattered in his mouth.

The spiritualists were surprised.

"This guy won't fall!?"

"Don't mind him! Forward!!"

While the spear-wielding spiritualists were surprised by Gortoberuk's sturdiness, the spiritualist wearing the white robe went on, passing by him. Gortoberuk tried to raise his arm in order to stop her, but he couldn't muster strength for that. It was as if he had lost the sense of touch on his arm.

"Tch, we also need to hurry up."

"But this demon is still not dead."

"Don't mind it. After all, there is no way it can move anymore..."

There was no way it could move anymore.

The instant the spiritualist was about to finish his line, Gortoberuk raised his arm. His arm pierced through that spiritualist's chest and he grasped the heart inside. The heart was beating in Gortoberuk's rough hand.

"Who do you think is letting you go?"

His eyes were bloodshot. Blood flowed from his mouth unceasingly. He already lacked

one of his arms, was pierced by sharp arrows throughout all his body, and there was a hole open at the right side of his chest. His whole body was filled with wounds. Despite that, Gortoberuk's fighting spirit didn't vanish.

"Tch, what a stubborn demon!!"

"We will follow after Rook-sama and Raku-sama after we have completely dealt with you!"

The face of the two remaining spiritualists were twisted in anger. The tempered body of a demon wasn't something that could be easily cut through. However, the other party were also tempered spiritualists. With that spear infused with a demon banning technique, it was possible to cut the hard flesh like cutting fruit.

Wondering in his mind if that was his end, Gortoberuk prepared himself for his death.

However, hoping he could at least stop one of those two spiritualists, he moved his hand covered in blood.

It was at that time.

"I see, Rook and Raku, is it?"

A leisure voice came down from above.

A red flash jumped into the scene.

At that same time, the huge lump of steel sent the head of the two spiritualists flying. There was no doubt those two spiritualists didn't know what happened to them. In fact, even Gortoberuk didn't know what happened until a few seconds after.

"Aren't you in a bad shape, general Gortoberuk?"

"Major general Riku... Barusak?"

Before one's notice, the sound of the battle had already stopped.

All the spiritualists were cut down; there wasn't anyone moving. Inside the red sea flowing from their bodies were Gortoberuk's subordinates on the ground exhausted. Apparently, Riku had dealt with all of the spiritualists in those few moments.

Although everything was over, it seemed she had gone through the equivalent amount of adversity. Her cheeks and arm were filled with injuries, and let alone her armor and clothes, even her hair was dyed in red.

"It seems this will be our parting."

"So it seems. However... it is fine like that."

Gortoberuk's eyes became warm. His clenched hand opened and his arm dropped hanging.

"You are important for the future of the Demon Lord army. I will be leaving the Demon Lord army... in your hands."

"...I will only follow the path I've chosen for myself."

Riku turned her back to Gortoberuk.

In front of her eyes lied a cave. There was the darkness that would engulf everything.

"But I will pay back the favor."

Saying only that, Riku dashed out.

As she ran, her red hair swayed left and right. Her swaying hair then became just a dot, only to finally vanish into the darkness. When it became that Gortoberuk couldn't see her anymore...

"Yes, it is... fine like this."



The old general Rudogar Gortoberuk silently closed his eyes.

# **Katahane no Riku - Chapter 98**

# 98.THE LAND OF THE SEAL

[The demon lord throws his own children off the cliff.]

There was a proverb in the demon society.

The many generations of demon lords would drop their children down the cliff, and would only make their successors the ones that survived. This custom wasn't only done by the demon lords, but it was also popular among the more influential demons.

Leivein Adlar was someone that had once gone through this test.

Even now he remembers about that day. When he was young, his father brought him to a cliff along with his brothers. He remembered the feeling of the bottom of his stomach getting cold the moment he looked down the cliff. The vast sea spread out to the distance under the cliff. While the waves were calm, because the cliff gave the impression like he was standing at the top of a pine tree, he could feel the altitude in his body. He felt he would definitely die if he was to fall down from there.

“Weaklings that would die only to this much aren't needed by the Adlar family.”

Saying only that, their father kicked him down the cliff.

Immediately after that, he heard the screams of his brothers following behind him. He didn't have the leisure to be looking back at them, nor did he have the leisure to be worrying about their safety. After facing an impact that felt as if it would break down his body, he gave a breath while moving his arms and legs in order to oppose the waves. Rather than breathing, saying he was gasping would be a better way to describe it. Sometimes he would end up drinking up some of the sea water, which would then linger at his throat.

It was painful, agonising, and exhausting. By the time he realised, when he couldn't move his arms and legs to the point it felt as if they had become made of lead, he had already hit

the shore. He remembered how his wings at his back were weighing him down, heavy as if they were a lump of metal.

With his cheek onto the white beach, he glanced over to the distance. There was somebody that collapsed. Leivein remembered seeing those clothes that person was wearing. The wind blew at his clothes and hair, making it flutter left and right.

He tried to shout for the name of his brothers, but because his throat was dry, only air would come out when he opened his mouth. Because he couldn't raise his voice, and because he felt dull to move, his eyelids started to become heavy. Even though he was only a child, he intuitively felt the fact that his [death] was nearing.

His brothers were dead. He was probably also going to die.

Facing such reality, his heart started to tremble.

His body started creaking left and right. A pain that felt as if it ran through inside his bones started to spread throughout his body. Because of the sea water, his body became cold and he couldn't stop his trembling. How much would of a relief would it be if he was to die and finally be released from all this agony? Having such mesmerizing thoughts, he started to feel he should let the sleepiness wrapping around his body take over his consciousness. But at the same time... he also wished he wouldn't die.

He didn't want to die at a place like this. He still wanted to live.

Leivein wanted to go back to his home, even if he was only to be away from the sea a little. Putting all his heart, he was able to move a finger. Even though he made all the effort, all he was able to do was to scratch the sand. He couldn't make any progress at all. But even so, he mustered strength deep from his heart and moved forward...

It was at that time that it happened.

"What is the matter, boy?"

He saw a foot.

When he raised his face, he saw a young girl that was looking at him curiously. She had

magnificent horns, a refreshing golden hair wok, beautiful round eyes filled with curiosity and a smooth white skin.

“You still want to live, don’t you?”

The young girl took out a water canteen from her pouch and brought it to his mouth.

“You may drink if you want to live. If you don’t, do not drink. I like demons that have a strong willpower. The Demon Lord army must stand strong after all.”

Seeing Leivein putting his mouth on the canteen, the girl showed a smile.

That smile was like a flower that sprouted in the desert. His eyes were being sucked by that lovely smile.

That demon was Charlotte Demonz.

She was the girl that would take the position of Demon Lord representative after the sealing of the Demon Lord.

---

That was darkness.

Being assaulted by the feeling of hurry, Rook Barusak continued his path while dragging his hand over the wall.

At first, light would still reach the cave. However, after going on for just ten meters, his field of view became completely shut by darkness. Even at the times he was at dark places or when he was moving at the night his eyes would still get used to the darkness. However, this time it was completely dark. In this world that lacked any light, his eyes didn’t become used to the darkness. Even if he was to focus his eyes with all he had, it was still only darkness and nothing else.

Even though only a few minutes should have passed by now, he felt as if it had already been more than ten minutes.

Because of that, when he was finally able to see a bit of light, he let out a sigh of relief.

The true identity of that light was the light green moss. The moss gave off a faint light and dimly illuminated the path. Making use of the light of the moss growing at the stone walls, he carefully proceeded step by step.

“...!”

A brighter light was coming from the corner just a bit ahead of him.

Nine out of ten that was the location of the seal.... In other words, it was the place of his last fight. Rook leaned his body at the wall right next to the corner. With one of his hands, he checked the amount of arrow he had remaining, and with his other one he grabbed his sword.

Just a bit more.

If he was to turn that corner, everything would be over.

As if to bring out his fighting spirit, Rook slowly breathed in and out. And then, he carefully peeked at the corner. Perhaps because he had been walking at such a dark place all this time, just by seeing a bit of brightness, his eyes started to feel dazzled. Narrowing his eyes, he tried to check the situation of the place even if for only a bit.

At that place was a stone hut.

At that open room, the smell of dampness wafted around. He distinctly felt a lonely presence. There was a stone coffin enshrined inside the stone hut. There were torches at the walls paralel to one another illuminating the coffin and giving it a ghastly feeling. Over the stone coffin was someone. When the fire of the torches revealed that person's face, Rook gave out a sigh of relief.

“...Princess.”

Rook gulped down and compared the situation with his game knowledge.

For the stone coffin to open, it was necessary to sacrifice the blood of the royalty and of a spiritualist of one of the four spiritualist families. If Rook was to let it happen, the Demon Lord would be resurrected and the world would fall in chaos. Looking from his view, it was still impossible to know for sure if the princess was still alive. He could see that nobody other than the princess had been brought there; nobody of the blood of one of the four spiritualist families other than Rook, such as Raku and Riku, who were also from the same blood. Due to that, the Demon Lord still hasn't resurrected.

Yes, the Demon Lord still hasn't resurrected.

Rook didn't spot anybody else other than the princess. Perhaps they had gone to look for someone else other than Rook for the sacrifice. Though he couldn't lower his guard just because of that... it was still very convenient for him.

"Princess!"

With all his strength, Rook stepped forward.

It was his perfect chance right now that nobody was around. He must not let this chance slip by. His hurried footsteps echoed at the room.

"I came to save you, princess. Quickly, we need to...!?"

However, when he came closer, he finally noticed.

The princess was completely still. Her small nose, well-formed lips, bountiful breasts, and thin fingers weren't moving by even a centimeter. Yes, it was as if she was a doll.

"Could it be this is a doll?"

Was this a trap made to lure Rook? As he was pondering over the possibility, he touched her cheek with his trembling fingers. Once he did that, a strand of blood flowed out of her blueish lips. At that instant, he felt his before rising blood pressure suddenly drop down all at once.

He was too late.

He didn't make it in time.

Speechless, and without even being able to move one step, he could only continue to look at her dead body. Now that he became aware that the princess has died, he realized he needed to bring her body along and escape in order to prevent the seal to be broken. Even though he knew what he had to do in his head, he wasn't able to move. Repeating his quick breathing, he was able to calm down his quickly beating heart.

And then, when he gave out a long breath, a strong beat of wings broke down the silence.

"...!?"

Rook immediately raised his head.

Having just looked up, he saw a black figure suddenly approaching him from the of the roof. Recognizing the sharp gleaming blade in the black silhouette was a sharp gleaming blade, Rook was able to recover from his shock. The black figure assaulted Rook with his sword in order to ward Rook away from the princess. The metallic sound and sparks coming from their blades drove the darkness away.

"I shall acknowledge your bravery for coming all the way here by yourself to save this woman, Rook Barusak."

Frowning, Rook glared at the black figure... Leivein Adlar.

The weight of a boulder was pressed onto Rook's body. Facing this overwhelming strength that made his arms numb, he clenched his teeth. He knew from the start that demons weren't easy opponents to the point that one would be able to suppress them with only one hand. Immediately bringing his other hand to support his sword, he shifted from defense to offense. While in reality he wanted to keep defending and wait for his opponent to show an opening, it was clear to him that he would be outmatched if he was to focus only on defending all the time.

"You may regret coming here now."



“As if I am going to regret doing so!”

Aiming for the gap in Leivein's armor, he carefully and swiftly swung his sword.

If he is able to blind his opponent's by using his demon banning power, the silver light, he will be able to go on with the battle more smoothly. However, even though Leivein was about to be blinded by the light, he had already seen through Rook's technique. After all, he possessed big wings that could even block the arrows infused with demon banning power. Without doubts, he.

Rook wasn't confident that he could beat Leivein head-on.

However, there was no way he could lose now.

Whether it was for the sake of the game, or for the sake of the world, such things didn't matter.

“I, for my own sake, will defeat you”

“Try, Rook Barusak.”

Leivein's great sword that was as long as his own height was swept at Rook's thin long sword. Even though Rook was a spiritualist, in the end he was nothing more than a human. There was no way Rook could defend against that sword whose attack carried along with it a gust of wind. Being sent flying by the sudden gust, Rook collided against the wall.

“Kuhah!”

A strong feeling of numbness ran through his back.

He knew it was the taste of blood that was spreading in his mouth. Licking his lips that were cut by the wind pressure, he tried to stand up as fast as possible. Carrying his sword vertically, Rook kicked the rough floor and jumped back in. Leivein also went over to attack Rook without wasting any time. The strength and speed of that attack was above the normal. On the other hand, Rook didn't just recklessly jump at Leivein either.

“...Go!!”

The instant the figure of both swords overlapped over each other, Rook changed the direction of his sword. He magnificently parried Leivein's attack and sent out a sharp horizontal attack. However, this attack aimed at Leivein's neck was a half-step away. At his neck was only a shallow reddish scratch. Rook clicked his tongue in his mind and proceeded by bringing out his next hand.

“Silver light!!”

Rook quickly gathered his demon banning power on his sword before Leivein could get in the offense.

As to be expected, even Leivein had to close his eyes against a flash shot at point-blank range. Of course, he was still someone that had climbed up to become one of the generals of the Demon Lord army. At least he could presume that his opponent was aiming for his life now. Reflexively closing himself into his wings, he protected his body.

However....

“Rook, keep pressing onto him! I will cover you!!”

“...!!”

Encouraging words resounded from the entrance.

Even though it had been only an instant that his attention was diverted and that he lost grasp of the surroundings due to having to shut his eyes, it became a fatal mistake for Leivein Adlar.

Rook himself also had his eyes blinded. However, using his intuition and memory, and leaving himself to the precision in his sword techniques he had been training, he aimed for Leivein's neck. Being encouraged by Raku's voice who came after him, he aimed for the neck without hesitations. However, he had made a slight miscalculation. Due to his eyes also being dazzled, he ended up diagonally slashing at Leivein's left shoulder, cutting it off his whole shoulder along with his arm.

When the demon banning power and the light that filled the whole place settled down, he could see Leivein Adlar breathing roughly. There couldn't even be seen traces of his magnificent wing remaining. From the cut, a large amount of blood was flowing like a river.

“Hah... Hah... You've lost your chance... To bring me down..”

“No, I think my little brother has done very well.”

Before one's notice, Raku was standing at the side with a proud face.

The white coat she was wearing didn't suit the battlefield. However, the whole coat was stained in blood.

“Raku-ane.... Your coat...”

“What, I can just change it later. ...You've done well, Rook. Now leave the rest to me.”

While saying that, Raku took out a hand grenade.

The power of Raku's explosives was guaranteed. With just one of them, it was possible to blow Leivein up into pieces. Fortunately, he had lost his left wing, and so couldn't escape to the sky. He also wouldn't be able to protect his body. It should also be impossible for him to evade the explosive thrown at him with his body in pain and his consciousness fading away.

Outside, Gortoberuk was now nothing but a corpse.

Inside, Leivein was also half inept for combat.

Once the spiritualists defeated those two, the remaining demons wouldn't be a problem.

They would be able to stop the unsealing of the Demon Lord. And then, the land of the seal would once again fall into slumber.

With that, they would have finally been able to stop the world from being destroyed.

“””It ends here!!””

The voice of the Barusak siblings overlapped. The hand-grenade was thrown from Raku’s hand.

But it happened at that instant...

“I won’t let you.”

A red haired girl jumped in between them.

With a speed that would make one’s eyes wide-open, the girl jumped in front of Leivein. Not stopping there, she immediately swung her halberd. The halberd flinged the hand-grenade back, blowing up right in front of the nose of its own manufacturer. (TL note: Raku nooo... ;-;)

“Ra-raku-ane!?”

Rook tried to rush over to Raku. However, he wasn’t able to go forward against the brightness and the shockwave of the explosion. Once the light and the explosion cleared up, there was nobody standing there anymore. Lying there was only a coat burnt black that didn’t retain any traces of its original form. Under it was a lump that gave off a foul smell.

“...Such an anticlimactic way to die. But don’t be sad, Rook Barusak.”

The embers of the explosion shined upon the charming smile of the girl that flinged back the hand-grenade... Riku Barusak.

Without being able to follow the situation that had so suddenly turned around, Rook could only look with surprise at the daring smile of his blood-related sister.

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